The World's Classics

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CRIME AND DETECTION

(*Second Series*)

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MR. HIGGINBOTHAM'S CATASTROPHE

By Nathaniel Hawthorne

A young fellow, a tobacco-pedlar by trade, was on his way from Morristown, where he had dealt largely with the Deacon of the Shaker settlement, to the village of Parker's Falls, on Salmon River. He had a neat little cart, painted green, with a box of cigars depicted on each side panel, and an Indian chief, holding a pipe and a golden tobacco-stalk, on the rear. The pedlar drove a smart little mare, and was a young man of excellent character, keen at a bargain, but none the worse liked by the Yankees; who, as I have heard them say, would rather be shaved with a sharp razor than a dull one. Especially was he beloved by the pretty girls along the Connecticut, whose favour he used to court by presents of the best smoking tobacco in his stock; knowing well that the country lasses of New England are generally great performers on pipes. Moreover, as will be seen in the course of my story, the pedlar was inquisitive, and something of a tattler, always itching to hear the news, and anxious to tell it again.

After an early breakfast at Morristown, the tobacco-pedlar, whose name was Dominicus Pike, had travelled seven miles through a solitary piece of woods without speaking a word to anybody but himself and his little grey mare. It being nearly seven o'clock, he was as eager to hold a morning gossip as a city shopkeeper to read the morning paper. An opportunity seemed at hand, when, after lighting

a cigar with a sun-glass, he looked up, and perceived a man coming over the brow of the hill, at the foot of which the pedlar had stopped his green cart. Dominicus watched him as he descended, and noticed that he carried a bundle over his shoulder on the end of a stick, and travelled with a weary, yet determined pace. He did not look as if he had started in the freshness of the morning, but had footed it all night, and meant to do the same all day.

'Good morning, mister,' said Dominicus, when within speaking distance. 'You go a pretty good jog. What 's the latest news at Parker's Falls?'

The man pulled the broad brim of a grey hat over his eyes, and answered, rather sullenly, that he did not come from Parker's Falls, which, as being the limit of his own day's journey, the pedlar had naturally mentioned in his inquiry.

'Well, then,' rejoined Dominicus Pike, 'let 's have the latest news where you did come from. I'm not particular about Parker's Falls. Any place will answer.'

Being thus importuned, the traveller—who was as ill looking a fellow as one would desire to meet in a solitary piece of woods—appeared to hesitate a little, as if he was either searching his memory for news, or weighing the expediency of telling it. At last, mounting on the step of the cart, he whispered in the ear of Dominicus, though he might have shouted aloud and no other mortal would have heard him.

'I do remember one little trifle of news,' said he. 'Old Mr. Higginbotham, of Kimballton, was murdered in his orchard, at eight o'clock last night, by an Irishman and a nigger. They strung him up to

the branch of a St. Michael's pear-tree, where nobody would find him till the morning.'

As soon as this horrible intelligence was communicated, the stranger betook himself to his journey again, with more speed than ever, not even turning his head when Dominicus invited him to smoke a Spanish cigar and relate all the particulars. The pedlar whistled to his mare and went up the hill, pondering on the doleful fate of Mr. Higginbotham, whom he had known in the way of trade, having sold him many a bunch of long nines, and a great deal of pigtail, lady's twist, and fig tobacco. He was rather astonished at the rapidity with which the news had spread. Kimballton was nearly sixty miles distant in a straight line; the murder had been perpetrated only at eight o'clock the preceding night; yet Dominicus had heard of it at seven in the morning, when, in all probability, poor Mr. Higginbotham's own family had but just discovered his corpse, hanging on the St. Michael's pear-tree. The stranger on foot must have worn seven-league boots, to travel at such a rate.

'Ill news flies fast, they say,' thought Dominicus Pike; 'but this beats railroads. The fellow ought to be hired to go express with the President's Message.'

The difficulty was solved, by supposing that the narrator had made a mistake of one day, in the date of the occurrence; so that our friend did not hesitate to introduce the story at every tavern and country store along the road, expending a whole bunch of Spanish wrappers among at least twenty horrified audiences. He found himself invariably the first bearer of the intelligence, and was so pestered with questions that he could not avoid filling

up the outline, till it became quite a respectable narrative. He met with one piece of corroborative evidence. Mr. Higginbotham was a trader; and a former clerk of his, to whom Dominicus related the facts, testified that the old gentleman was accustomed to return home through the orchard, about nightfall, with the money and valuable papers of the store in his pocket. The clerk manifested but little grief at Mr. Higginbotham's catastrophe, hinting, what the pedlar had discovered in his own dealings with him, that he was a crusty old fellow, as close as a vice. His property would descend to a pretty niece who was now keeping school in Kimballton.

What with telling the news for the public good, and driving bargains for his own, Dominicus was so much delayed on the road, that he chose to put up at a tavern, about five miles short of Parker's Falls. After supper, lighting one of his prime cigars, he seated himself in the bar-room, and went through the story of the murder, which had grown so fast that it took him half an hour to tell. There were as many as twenty people in the room, nineteen of whom received it all for gospel. But the twentieth was an elderly farmer, who had arrived on horseback a short time before, and was now seated in a corner, smoking his pipe. When the story was concluded, he rose up very deliberately, brought his chair right in front of Dominicus, and stared him full in the face, puffing out the vilest tobacco-smoke the pedlar had ever smelt.

'Will you make an affidavit,' demanded he in the tone of a country justice taking an examination, 'that old Squire Higginbotham of Kimballton was

murdered in his orchard the night before last, and found hanging on his great pear-tree yesterday morning?'

'I tell the story as I heard it, mister,' answered Dominicus dropping his half-burnt cigar; 'I don't say that I saw the thing done. So I can't take my oath that he was murdered exactly in that way.'

'But I can take mine,' said the farmer, 'that if Squire Higginbotham was murdered night before last, I drank a glass of bitters with his ghost this morning. Being a neighbour of mine, he called me into his store, as I was riding by, and treated me, and then asked me to do a little business for him on the road. He didn't seem to know any more about his own murder than I did.'

'Why, then it can't be a fact!' exclaimed Dominicus Pike.

'I guess he'd have mentioned it, if it was,' said the old farmer; and he removed his chair back to the corner, leaving Dominicus quite down in the mouth.

Here was a sad resurrection of old Mr. Higginbotham! The pedlar had no heart to mingle in the conversation any more, but comforted himself with a glass of gin-and-water, and went to bed, where, all night long, he dreamed of hanging on the St. Michael's pear-tree. To avoid the old farmer (whom he so detested that his suspension would have pleased him better than Mr. Higginbotham's), Dominicus rose in the grey of the morning, put the little mare into the green cart, and trotted swiftly away towards Parker's Falls. The fresh breeze, the dewy road, and the pleasant summer dawn revived his spirits, and might have encouraged him to repeat the

old story, had there been anybody awake to hear it. But he met neither ox team, light wagon, chaise, horseman, nor foot traveller, till, just as he crossed Salmon River, a man came trudging down to the bridge with a bundle over his shoulder, on the end of a stick.

'Good morning, mister,' said the pedlar, reining in his mare. 'If you come from Kimballton or that neighbourhood, may be you can tell me the real fact about this affair of old Mr. Higginbotham. Was the old fellow actually murdered two or three nights ago, by an Irishman and a nigger?'

Dominicus had spoken in too great a hurry to observe, at first, that the stranger himself had a deep tinge of negro blood. On hearing this sudden question, the Ethiopian appeared to change his skin, its yellow hue becoming a ghastly white, while, shaking and stammering, he thus replied:—

'No! no! There was no coloured man! It was an Irishman that hanged him last night, at eight o'clock. I came away at seven! His folks can't have looked for him in the orchard yet.'

Scarcely had the yellow man spoken, when he interrupted himself, and though he seemed weary enough before, continued his journey at a pace which would have kept the pedlar's mare on a smart trot. Dominicus stared after him in great perplexity. If the murder had not been committed till Tuesday night, who was the prophet that had foretold it, in all its circumstances, on Tuesday morning? If Mr. Higginbotham's corpse were not yet discovered by his own family, how came the mulatto, at above thirty miles distance, to know that he was hanging in the orchard, especially as he had left

Kimballton before the unfortunate man was hanged at all? These ambiguous circumstances, with the stranger's surprise and terror, made Dominicus think of raising a hue and cry after him, as an accomplice in the murder; since a murder, it seemed, had really been perpetrated.

'But let the poor devil go,' thought the pedlar. 'I don't want his black blood on my head; and hanging the nigger wouldn't unhang Mr. Higginbotham. Unhang the old gentleman! It 's a sin, I know; but I should hate to have him come to life a second time, and give me the lie!'

With these meditations, Dominicus Pike drove into the street of Parker's Falls, which, as everybody knows, is as thriving a village as three cotton-factories and a slitting-mill can make it. The machinery was not in motion, and but a few of the shop-doors unbarred, when he alighted in the stable-yard of the tavern, and made it his first business to order the mare four quarts of oats. His second duty, of course, was to impart Mr. Higginbotham's catastrophe to the ostler. He deemed it advisable, however, not to be too positive as to the date of the direful fact, and also to be uncertain whether it were perpetrated by an Irishman and a mulatto, or by the son of Erin alone. Neither did he profess to relate it on his own authority, or that of any one person; but mentioned it as a report generally diffused.

The story ran through the town like fire among girdled trees, and became so much the universal talk, that nobody could tell whence it had originated. Mr. Higginbotham was as well known at Parker's Falls as any citizen of the place, being part

owner of the slitting-mill, and a considerable stockholder in the cotton-factories. The inhabitants felt their own prosperity interested in his fate. Such was the excitement, that the Parker's Falls *Gazette* anticipated its regular day of publication, and came out with half a form of blank paper and a column of double pica emphasized with capitals, and headed HORRID MURDER OF MR. HIGGINBOTHAM! Among other dreadful details, the printed account described the mark of the cord round the dead man's neck, and stated the number of thousand dollars of which he had been robbed; there was much pathos also about the affliction of his niece, who had gone from one fainting fit to another, ever since her uncle was found hanging on the St. Michael's pear-tree with his pockets inside out. The village poet likewise commemorated the young lady's grief in seventeen stanzas of a ballad. The selectmen held a meeting, and, in consideration of Mr. Higginbotham's claims on the town, determined to issue handbills, offering a reward of five hundred dollars for the apprehension of his murderers, and the recovery of the stolen property.

Meanwhile the whole population of Parker's Falls, consisting of shopkeepers, mistresses of boarding-houses, factory-girls, mill-men, and schoolboys, rushed into the street and kept up such a terrible loquacity, as more than compensated for the silence of the cotton-machines, which refrained from their usual din, out of respect to the deceased. Had Mr. Higginbotham cared about posthumous renown, his untimely ghost would have exulted in this tumult. Our friend Dominicus, in his vanity of heart, forgot his intended precautions, and moun-

ting on the town-pump, announced himself as the bearer of the authentic intelligence which had caused so wonderful a sensation. He immediately became the great man of the moment, and had just begun a new edition of the narrative, with a voice like a field preacher, when the mail-stage drove into the village street. It had travelled all night, and must have shifted horses at Kimballton at three in the morning.

'Now we shall hear all the particulars,' shouted the crowd.

The coach rumbled up to the piazza of the tavern, followed by a thousand people; for if any man had been minding his own business till then, he now left it at sixes and sevens, to hear the news. The pedlar, foremost in the race, discovered two passengers, both of whom had been startled from a comfortable nap to find themselves in the centre of a mob. Every man assailing them with separate questions, all propounded at once, the couple were struck speechless, though one was a lawyer and the other a young lady.

'Mr Higginbotham! Mr. Higginbotham! Tell us the particulars about old Mr. Higginbotham!' bawled the mob. 'What is the coroner's verdict? Are the murderers apprehended? Is Mr. Higginbotham's niece come out of her fainting fits? Mr. Higginbotham! Mr. Higginbotham!'

The coachman said not a word, except to swear awfully at the ostler for not bringing him a fresh team of horses. The lawyer inside had generally his wits about him, even when asleep; the first thing he did, after learning the cause of the excitement, was to produce a large red pocket-book. Meantime,

Dominicus Pike, being an extremely polite young man, and also suspecting that a female tongue would tell the story as glibly as a lawyer's, had handed the lady out of the coach. She was a fine, smart girl, now wide awake and bright as a button, and had such a sweet pretty mouth, that Dominicus would almost as lief have heard a love tale from it as a tale of murder.

'Gentlemen and ladies,' said the lawyer, to the shop-keepers, the mill-men, and the factory-girls, 'I can assure you that some unaccountable mistake, or, more probably, a wilful falsehood, maliciously contrived to injure Mr. Higginbotham's credit, has excited this singular uproar. We passed through Kimballton at three o'clock this morning, and most certainly should have been informed of the murder had any been perpetrated. But I have proof nearly as strong as Mr. Higginbotham's own oral testimony in the negative. Here is a note, relating to a suit of his in the Connecticut courts, which was delivered me from that gentleman himself. I find it dated at ten o'clock last evening.'

So saying, the lawyer exhibited the date and signature of the note, which irrefragably proved, either that this perverse Mr. Higginbotham was alive when he wrote it, or—as some deemed the more probable case of two doubtful ones—that he was so absorbed in worldly business as to continue to transact it, even after his death. But unexpected evidence was forthcoming. The young lady, after listening to the pedlar's explanation, merely seized a moment to smooth her gown and put her curls in order, and then appeared at the tavern door, making a modest signal to be heard.

'Good people,' said she, 'I am Mr. Higginbotham's niece.'

A wondering murmur passed through the crowd, on beholding her so rosy and bright; the same unhappy niece, whom they had supposed, on the authority of the Parker's Falls *Gazette*, to be lying at death's door in a fainting fit. But some shrewd fellows had doubted, all along, whether a young lady would be quite so desperate at the hanging of a rich old uncle.

'You see,' continued Miss Higginbotham, with a smile, 'that this strange story is quite unfounded, as to myself; and I believe I may affirm it to be equally so, in regard to my dear uncle Higginbotham. He has the kindness to give me a home in his house, though I contribute to my own support by teaching a school. I left Kimballton this morning to spend the vacation of commencement week with a friend, about five miles from Parker's Falls. My generous uncle, when he heard me on the stairs, called me to his bedside, and gave me two dollars and fifty cents, to pay my stage fare, and another dollar for my extra expenses. He then laid his pocket-book under his pillow, shook hands with me, and advised me to take some biscuit in my bag, instead of breakfasting on the road. I feel confident, therefore, that I left my beloved relative alive, and trust that I shall find him so on my return.'

The young lady courtesied at the close of her speech, which was so sensible and well worded, and delivered with such grace and propriety, that everybody thought her fit to be preceptress of the best academy in the State. But a stranger would have supposed that Mr. Higginbotham was an object of

abhorrence at Parker's Falls, and that a thanksgiving had been proclaimed for his murder, so excessive was the wrath of the inhabitants, on learning their mistake. The mill-men resolved to bestow public honours on Dominicus Pike, only hesitating whether to tar and feather him, ride him on a rail, or refresh him with an ablution at the town pump, on the top of which he had declared himself the bearer of the news. The selectmen, by advice of the lawyer, spoke of prosecuting him for a misdemeanour, in circulating unfounded reports, to the great disturbance of the peace of the Commonwealth. Nothing saved Dominicus, either from mob law or a court of justice, but an eloquent appeal made by the young lady in his behalf. Addressing a few words of heartfelt gratitude to his benefactress, he mounted the green cart and rode out of town, under a discharge of artillery from the school-boys, who found plenty of ammunition in the neighbouring clay-pits and mud-holes. As he turned his head, to exchange a farewell glance with Mr. Higginbotham's niece, a ball of the consistence of hasty-pudding hit him slap in the mouth, giving him a most grim aspect. His whole person was so bespattered with the like filthy missiles, that he had almost a mind to ride back, and supplicate for the threatened ablution at the town pump; for, though not meant in kindness, it would now have been a deed of charity.

However, the sun shone bright on poor Dominicus, and the mud, an emblem of all stains of undeserved opprobrium, was easily brushed off when dry. Being a funny rogue, his heart soon cheered up; nor could he refrain from a hearty laugh at the

uproar which his story had excited. The handbills of the selectmen would cause the commitment of all the vagabonds in the State; the paragraph in the Parker's Falls *Gazette* would be reprinted from Maine to Florida, and perhaps form an item in the London newspapers; and many a miser would tremble for his money-bags and life on learning the catastrophe of Mr. Higginbotham. The pedlar meditated with much fervour on the charms of the young schoolmistress, and swore that Daniel Webster never spoke nor looked so like an angel as Miss Higginbotham, while defending him from the wrathful populace at Parker's Falls.

Dominicus was now on the Kimballton turnpike, having all along determined to visit that place, though business had drawn him out of the most direct road from Morristown. As he approached the scene of the supposed murder, he continued to revolve the circumstances in his mind, and was astonished at the aspect which the whole case assumed. Had nothing occurred to corroborate the story of the first traveller, it might now have been considered as a hoax; but the yellow man was evidently acquainted either with the report or the fact; and there was a mystery in his dismayed and guilty look on being abruptly questioned. When, to this singular combination of incidents, it was added that the rumour tallied exactly with Mr. Higginbotham's character and habits of life; and that he had an orchard, and a St. Michael's pear-tree, near which he always passed at nightfall; the circumstantial evidence appeared so strong that Dominicus doubted whether the autograph produced by the lawyer, or even the niece's direct testimony,

ought to be equivalent. Making cautious inquiries along the road, the pedlar further learned that Mr. Higginbotham had in his service an Irishman of doubtful character, whom he had hired without a recommendation, on the score of economy.

'May I be hanged myself,' exclaimed Dominicus Pike aloud, on reaching the top of a lonely hill, 'if I'll believe old Higginbotham is unhanged, till I see him with my own eyes, and hear it from his own mouth! And as he 's a real shaver, I'll have the minister or some other responsible man, for an endorser.'

It was growing dusk when he reached the toll-house on Kimballton turnpike, about a quarter of a mile from the village of this name. His little mare was fast bringing him up with a man on horseback, who trotted through the gate a few rods in advance of him, nodded to the toll-gatherers, and kept on towards the village. Dominicus was acquainted with the tollman, and while making change, the usual remarks on the weather passed between them.

'I suppose,' said the pedlar, throwing back his whiplash to bring it down like a feather on the mare's flank, 'you have not seen anything of old Mr. Higginbotham within a day or two?'

'Yes,' answered the toll-gatherer. 'He passed the gate just before you drove up, and yonder he rides now, if you can see him through the dusk. He 's been to Woodfield this afternoon, attending a sheriff's sale there. The old man generally shakes hands and has a little chat with me; but to-night he nodded,– as if to say, 'Charge my toll,' and jogged on; for wherever he goes, he must always be at home by eight o'clock.'

'So they tell me,' said Dominicus.

'I never saw a man look so yellow and thin as the squire does,' continued the toll-gatherer. 'Says I to myself, to-night, he 's more like a ghost or an old mummy than good flesh and blood.'

The pedlar strained his eyes through the twilight, and could just discern the horseman now far ahead on the village road. He seemed to recognize the rear of Mr. Higginbotham; but through the evening shadows, and amid the dust from the horse's feet, the figure appeared dim and unsubstantial; as if the shape of the mysterious old man were faintly moulded of darkness and grey light. Dominicus shivered.

'Mr. Higginbotham has come back from the other world, by way of the Kimballton turnpike,' thought he.

He shook the reins and rode forward, keeping about the same distance in the rear of the grey old shadow, till the latter was concealed by a bend of the road. On reaching this point, the pedlar no longer saw the man on horseback, but found himself at the head of the village street, not far from a number of stores and two taverns, clustered round the meeting-house steeple. On his left were a stone wall and a gate, the boundary of a wood-lot, beyond which lay an orchard, farther still a mowing field, and last of all a house. These were the premises of Mr. Higginbotham, whose dwelling stood beside the old highway, but had been left in the background by the Kimballton turnpike. Dominicus knew the place; and the little mare stopped short by instinct; for he was not conscious of tightening the reins.

'For the soul of me, I cannot get by this gate!'

said he, trembling. 'I never shall be my own man again, till I see whether Mr. Higginbotham is hanging on the St. Michael's pear-tree!'

He leaped from the cart, gave the rein a turn round the gate-post, and ran along the green path of the wood-lot, as if Old Nick were chasing behind. Just then the village clock tolled eight, and as each deep stroke fell, Dominicus gave a fresh bound and flew faster than before, till, dim in the solitary centre of the orchard, he saw the fated pear-tree. One great branch stretched from the old contorted trunk across the path, and threw the darkest shadow on that one spot. But something seemed to struggle beneath the branch!

The pedlar had never pretended to more courage than befits a man of peaceable occupation, nor could he account for his valour on this awful emergency. Certain it is, however, that he rushed forward, prostrated a sturdy Irishman with the butt-end of his whip, and found—not indeed hanging on the St. Michael's pear-tree, but trembling beneath it, with a halter round his neck— the old, identical Mr. Higginbotham!

'Mr. Higginbotham,' said Dominicus, tremulously, 'you're an honest man, and I'll take your word for it. Have you been hanged, or not?'

If the riddle be not already guessed, a few words will explain the simple machinery by which this 'coming event' was made to 'cast its shadow before.' Three men had plotted the robbery and murder of Mr. Higginbotham; two of them, successively, lost courage and fled, each delaying the crime one night, by their disappearance; the third was in the act of perpetration, when a champion, blindly obeying

the call of fate, like the heroes of old romance, appeared in the person of Dominicus Pike.

It only remains to say, that Mr. Higginbotham took the pedlar into high favour, sanctioned his addresses to the pretty schoolmistress, and settled his whole property on their children, allowing themselves the interest. In due time, the old gentleman capped the climax of his favours by dying a Christian death, in bed, since which melancholy event Dominicus Pike has removed from Kimballton, and established a large tobacco manufactory in my native village.

THE MYSTERY OF MARIE ROGÊT[1]

A SEQUEL TO 'THE MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE'

By E. A. Poe

Es giebt eine Reihe idealischer Begebenheiten, die der Wirklichkeit parallel läuft. Selten fallen sie zusammen. Menschen und Zufälle modificiren gewöhnlich die idealische Begebenheit, so dass sie unvollkommen erscheint, und ihre Folgen gleichfalls unvollkommen sind. So bei der Reformation; statt des Protestantismus kam das Lutherthum hervor.

There are ideal series of events which run parallel with the real ones. They rarely coincide. Men and circumstances generally modify the ideal train of events, so that it seems imperfect, and its consequences are equally imperfect. Thus with the Reformation; instead of Protestantism came Lutheranism.—Novalis:[2] *Moralische Ansichten.*

THERE are few persons, even among the calmest thinkers, who have not occasionally been startled into a vague yet thrilling half-credence in the supernatural, by *coincidences* of so seemingly marvellous a character that, as *mere* coincidences, the intellect

[1] Upon the original publication of 'Marie Rogêt', the footnotes now appended were considered unnecessary; but the lapse of several years since the tragedy upon which the tale is based renders it expedient to give them, and also to say a few words in explanation of the general design. A young girl, *Mary Cecilia Rogers*, was murdered in the vicinity of New York; and, although her death occasioned an intense and long-enduring excitement, the mystery attending it had remained unsolved at the period when the present paper was written and published (November, 1842). Herein, under pretence of relating the fate of a Parisian *grisette*, the author has followed, in minute detail, the essential, while merely paralleling the inessential facts of the

has been unable to receive them. Such sentiments —for the half-credences of which I speak have never the full force of *thought*—such sentiments are seldom thoroughly stifled unless by reference to the doctrine of chance, or, as it is technically termed, the Calculus of Probabilities. Now this Calculus is, in its essence, purely mathematical; and thus we have the anomaly of the most rigidly exact in science applied to the shadow and spirituality of the most intangible in speculation.

The extraordinary details which I am now called upon to make public, will be found to form, as regards sequence of time, the primary branch of a series of scarcely intelligible *coincidences*, whose secondary or concluding branch will be recognized by all readers in the late murder of MARY CECILIA ROGERS, at New York.

When, in an article entitled 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue', I endeavoured, about a year ago, to depict some very remarkable features in the mental character of my friend, the Chevalier C. Auguste

real murder of Mary Rogers. Thus all argument founded upon the fiction is applicable to the truth: and the investigation of the truth was the object.

The 'Mystery of Marie Rogêt' was composed at a distance from the scene of the atrocity, and with no other means of investigation than the newspapers afforded. Thus much escaped the writer of which he could have availed himself had he been upon the spot, and visited the localities. It may not be improper to record, nevertheless, that the confessions of *two* persons (one of them the Madame Deluc of the narrative) made, at different periods, long subsequent to the publication, confirmed, in full, not only the general conclusion, but absolutely *all* the chief hypothetical details by which that conclusion was attained.

[2] The *nom de plume* of von Hardenberg. (See reference on p. 18.)

Dupin, it did not occur to me that I should ever resume the subject. This depicting of character constituted my design; and this design was thoroughly fulfilled in the wild train of circumstances brought to instance Dupin's idiosyncrasy. I might have adduced other examples, but I should have proven no more. Late events, however, in their surprising development, have startled me into some farther details, which will carry with them the air of extorted confession. Hearing what I have lately heard, it would be indeed strange should I remain silent in regard to what I both heard and saw so long ago.

Upon the winding up of the tragedy involved in the deaths of Madame L'Espanaye and her daughter, the Chevalier dismissed the affair at once from his attention, and relapsed into his old habits of moody reverie. Prone, at all times, to abstraction, I readily fell in with his humour; and, continuing to occupy our chambers in the Faubourg Saint Germain, we gave the Future to the winds, and slumbered tranquilly in the Present, weaving the dull world around us into dreams.

But these dreams were not altogether uninterrupted. It may readily be supposed that the part played by my friend, in the drama at the Rue Morgue, had not failed of its impression upon the fancies of the Parisian police. With its emissaries, the name of Dupin had grown into a household word. The simple character of those inductions by which he had disentangled the mystery never having been explained even to the Prefect, or to any other individual than myself, of course it is not surprising that the affair was regarded as little less

than miraculous, or that the Chevalier's analytical abilities acquired for him the credit of intuition. His frankness would have led him to disabuse every inquirer of such prejudice; but his indolent humour forbade all farther agitation of a topic whose interest to himself had long ceased. It thus happened that he found himself the cynosure of the policial eyes; and the cases were not few in which attempt was made to engage his services at the Prefecture. One of the most remarkable instances was that of the murder of a young girl named Marie Rogêt.

This event occurred about two years after the atrocity in the Rue Morgue. Marie, whose Christian and family name will at once arrest attention from their resemblance to those of the unfortunate 'cigar-girl', was the only daughter of the widow Estelle Rogêt. The father had died during the child's infancy, and from the period of his death, until within eighteen months before the assassination which forms the subject of our narrative, the mother and daughter had dwelt together in the Rue Pavée Saint Andrée;[1] Madame there keeping a *pension*, assisted by Marie. Affairs went on thus until the latter had attained her twenty-second year, when her great beauty attracted the notice of a perfumer, who occupied one of the shops in the basement of the Palais Royal, and whose custom lay chiefly among the desperate adventurers infesting that neighbourhood. Monsieur Le Blanc[2] was not unaware of the advantages to be derived from the attendance of the fair Marie in his perfumery; and his liberal proposals were accepted eagerly by the girl, although with somewhat more of hesitation by Madame.

[1] Nassau Street. [2] Anderson.

The anticipations of the shopkeeper were realized, and his rooms soon became notorious through the charms of the sprightly *grisette*. She had been in his employ about a year, when her admirers were thrown into confusion by her sudden disappearance from the shop. Monsieur Le Blanc was unable to account for her absence, and Madame Rogêt was distracted with anxiety and terror. The public papers immediately took up the theme, and the police were upon the point of making serious investigations, when, one fine morning, after the lapse of a week, Marie, in good health, but with a somewhat saddened air, made her re-appearance at her usual counter in the perfumery. All inquiry, except that of a private character, was of course immediately hushed. Monsieur Le Blanc professed total ignorance, as before. Marie, with Madame, replied to all questions, that the last week had been spent at the house of a relation in the country. Thus the affair died away, and was generally forgotten; for the girl, ostensibly to relieve herself from the impertinence of curiosity, soon bade a final adieu to the perfumer, and sought the shelter of her mother's residence in the Rue Pavée Saint Andrée.

It was about five months after this return home, that her friends were alarmed by her sudden disappearance for the second time. Three days elapsed, and nothing was heard of her. On the fourth her corpse was found floating in the Seine,[1] near the shore which is opposite the Quartier of the Rue Saint Andrée, and at a point not very far distant from the secluded neighbourhood of the Barrière du Roule.[2]

[1] The Hudson. [2] Weehawken.

The atrocity of this murder (for it was at once evident that murder had been committed), the youth and beauty of the victim, and, above all, her previous notoriety, conspired to produce intense excitement in the minds of the sensitive Parisians. I can call to mind no similar occurrence producing so general and so intense an effect. For several weeks, in the discussion of this one absorbing theme, even the momentous political topics of the day were forgotten. The Prefect made unusual exertions; and the powers of the whole Parisian police were, of course, tasked to the utmost extent.

Upon the first discovery of the corpse, it was not supposed that the murderer would be able to elude, for more than a very brief period, the inquisition which was immediately set on foot. It was not until the expiration of a week that it was deemed necessary to offer a reward; and even then this reward was limited to a thousand francs. In the meantime the investigation proceeded with vigour, if not always with judgement; and numerous individuals were examined to no purpose; while, owing to the continual absence of all clue to the mystery, the popular excitement greatly increased. At the end of the tenth day it was thought advisable to double the sum originally proposed; and, at length, the second week having elapsed without leading to any discoveries, and the prejudice which always exists in Paris against the Police having given vent to itself in several serious *émeutes*, the Prefect took it upon himself to offer the sum of twenty thousand francs 'for the conviction of the assassin', or, if more than one should prove to have been implicated, 'for the conviction of any one of the assas-

sins'. In the proclamation setting forth this reward, a full pardon was promised to any accomplice who should come forward in evidence against his fellow; and to the whole was appended, wherever it appeared, the private placard of a committee of citizens, offering ten thousand francs, in addition to the amount proposed by the Prefecture. The entire reward thus stood at no less than thirty thousand francs, which will be regarded as an extraordinary sum when we consider the humble condition of the girl, and the great frequency, in large cities, of such atrocities as the one described.

No one doubted now that the mystery of this murder would be immediately brought to light. But although, in one or two instances, arrests were made which promised elucidation, yet nothing was elicited which could implicate the parties suspected; and they were discharged forthwith. Strange as it may appear, the third week from the discovery of the body had passed, and passed without any light being thrown upon the subject, before even a rumour of the events which had so agitated the public mind reached the ears of Dupin and myself. Engaged in researches which had absorbed our whole attention, it had been nearly a month since either of us had gone abroad, or received a visitor, or more than glanced at the leading political articles in one of the daily papers. The first intelligence of the murder was brought us by G——, in person. He called upon us early in the afternoon of the thirteenth of July, 18—, and remained with us until late in the night. He had been piqued by the failure of all his endeavours to ferret out the assassins. His reputation—so he said with a peculiarly Parisian

air was at stake. Even his honour was concerned. The eyes of the public were upon him; and there was really no sacrifice which he would not be willing to make for the development of the mystery. He concluded a somewhat droll speech with a compliment upon what he was pleased to term the *tact* of Dupin, and made him a direct, and certainly a liberal proposition, the precise nature of which I do not feel myself at liberty to disclose, but which has no bearing upon the proper subject of my narrative.

The compliment my friend rebutted as best he could, but the proposition he accepted at once, although its advantages were altogether provisional. This point being settled, the Prefect broke forth at once into explanations of his own views, interspersing them with long comments upon the evidence; of which latter we were not yet in possession. He discoursed much, and beyond doubt, learnedly; while I hazarded an occasional suggestion as the night wore drowsily away. Dupin, sitting steadily in his accustomed arm-chair, was the embodiment of respectful attention. He wore spectacles during the whole interview; and an occasional glance beneath their green glasses sufficed to convince me that he slept not the less soundly, because silently, throughout the seven or eight leaden-footed hours which immediately preceded the departure of the Prefect.

In the morning I procured, at the Prefecture, a full report of all the evidence elicited, and, at the various newspaper offices, a copy of every paper in which, from first to last, had been published any decisive information in regard to this sad affair.

Freed from all that was positively disproved, this mass of information stood thus:

Marie Rogêt left the residence of her mother, in the Rue Pavée St. Andrée, about nine o'clock in the morning of Sunday, June the twenty-second, 18—. In going out, she gave notice to a Monsieur Jacques St. Eustache,[1] and to him only, of her intention to spend the day with an aunt who resided in the Rue des Drômes. The Rue des Drômes is a short and narrow but populous thoroughfare, not far from the banks of the river, and at a distance of some two miles, in the most direct course possible, from the *pension* of Madame Rogêt. St. Eustache was the accepted suitor of Marie, and lodged, as well as took his meals, at the *pension*. He was to have gone for his betrothed at dusk, and to have escorted her home. In the afternoon, however, it came on to rain heavily; and, supposing that she would remain all night at her aunt's (as she had done under similar circumstances before), he did not think it necessary to keep his promise. As night drew on, Madame Rogêt (who was an infirm old lady, seventy years of age) was heard to express a fear 'that she should never see Marie again'; but this observation attracted little attention at the time.

On Monday, it was ascertained that the girl had not been to the Rue des Drômes: and when the day elapsed without tidings of her, a tardy search was instituted at several points in the city, and its environs. It was not, however, until the fourth day from the period of her disappearance that anything satisfactory was ascertained respecting her. On this day (Wednesday, the twenty-fifth of June)

[1] Payne.

a Monsieur Beauvais,[1] who, with a friend, had been making inquiries for Marie near the Barrière du Roule, on the shore of the Seine which is opposite the Rue Pavée St. Andrée, was informed that a corpse had just been towed ashore by some fishermen, who had found it floating in the river. Upon seeing the body, Beauvais, after some hesitation, identified it as that of the perfumery-girl. His friend recognized it more promptly.

The face was suffused with dark blood, some of which issued from the mouth. No foam was seen, as in the case of the merely drowned. There was no discoloration in the cellular tissue. About the throat were bruises and impressions of fingers. The arms were bent over on the chest and were rigid. The right hand was clenched; the left partially open. On the left wrist were two circular excoriations, apparently the effect of ropes, or of a rope in more than one volution. A part of the right wrist, also, was much chafed, as well as the back throughout its extent, but more especially at the shoulder-blades. In bringing the body to the shore the fishermen had attached to it a rope; but none of the excoriations had been effected by this. The flesh of the neck was much swollen. There were no cuts apparent, or bruises which appeared the effect of blows. A piece of lace was found tied so tightly around the neck as to be hidden from sight; it was completely buried in the flesh, and was fastened by a knot which lay just under the left ear. This alone would have sufficed to produce death. The medical testimony spoke confidently of the virtuous character of the deceased. She had been subjected,

[1] Crommelin.

it said, to brutal violence. The corpse was in such condition when found, that there could have been no difficulty in its recognition by friends.

The dress was much torn and otherwise disordered. In the outer garment, a slip, about a foot wide, had been torn upward from the bottom hem to the waist, but not torn off. It was wound three times around the waist, and secured by a sort of hitch in the back. The dress immediately beneath the frock was of fine muslin; and from this a slip eighteen inches wide had been torn entirely out—torn very evenly and with great care. It was found around her neck, fitting loosely, and secured with a hard knot. Over this muslin slip and the slip of lace, the strings of a bonnet were attached; the bonnet being appended. The knot by which the strings of the bonnet were fastened, was not a lady's, but a slip or sailor's knot.

After the recognition of the corpse, it was not, as usual, taken to the Morgue (this formality being superfluous), but hastily interred not far from the spot at which it was brought ashore. Through the exertions of Beauvais, the matter was industriously hushed up, as far as possible; and several days had elapsed before any public emotion resulted. A weekly paper,[1] however at length took up the theme; the corpse was disinterred, and a re-examination instituted; but nothing was elicited beyond what has been already noted. The clothes, however, were now submitted to the mother and friends of the deceased, and fully identified as those worn by the girl upon leaving home.

Meantime, the excitement increased hourly.

[1] The 'N. Y. Mercury'.

Several individuals were arrested and discharged. St. Eustache fell especially under suspicion; and he failed, at first, to give an intelligible account of his whereabouts during the Sunday on which Marie left home. Subsequently, however, he submitted to Monsieur G——, affidavits, accounting satisfactorily for every hour of the day in question. As time passed and no discovery ensued, a thousand contradictory rumours were circulated, and journalists busied themselves in *suggestions*. Among these, the one which attracted the most notice, was the idea that Marie Rogêt still lived—that the corpse found in the Seine was that of some other unfortunate. It will be proper that I submit to the reader some passages which embody the suggestion alluded to. These passages are *literal* translations from 'L'Étoile',[1] a paper conducted, in general, with much ability.

'Mademoiselle Rogêt left her mother's house on Sunday morning, June the twenty-second, 18—, with the ostensible purpose of going to see her aunt, or some other connexion, in the Rue des Drômes. From that hour, nobody is proved to have seen her. There is no trace or tidings of her at all. . . . . There has no person, whatever, come forward, so far, who saw her at all, on that day, after she left her mother's door. . . . . Now, though we have no evidence that Marie Rogêt was in the land of the living after nine o'clock on Sunday, June the twenty-second, we have proof that, up to that hour, she was alive. On Wednesday noon, at twelve, a female body was discovered afloat on the shore of the Barrière du Roule. This was, even if we presume that Marie Rogêt was thrown into the river within three

[1] The 'N. Y. Brother Jonathan', edited by H. Hastings Weld, Esq.

hours after she left her mother's house, only three days from the time she left her home—three days to an hour. But it is folly to suppose that the murder, if murder was committed on her body, could have been consummated soon enough to have enabled her murderers to throw the body into the river before midnight. Those who are guilty of such horrid crimes, choose darkness rather than light. . . . . Thus we see that if the body found in the river *was* that of Marie Rogêt, it could only have been in the water two and a half days, or three at the outside. All experience has shown that drowned bodies, or bodies thrown into the water immediately after death by violence, require from six to ten days for sufficient decomposition to take place to bring them to the top of the water. Even where a cannon is fired over a corpse, and it rises before at least five or six days' immersion, it sinks again, if let alone. Now, we ask, what was there in this case to cause a departure from the ordinary course of nature? . . . . If the body had been kept in its mangled state on shore until Tuesday night, some trace would be found on shore of the murderers. It is a doubtful point, also, whether the body would be so soon afloat, even were it thrown in after having been dead two days. And, furthermore, it is exceedingly improbable that any villains who had committed such a murder as is here supposed, would have thrown the body in without weight to sink it, when such a precaution could have so easily been taken.'

The editor here proceeds to argue that the body must have been in the water 'not three days merely, but, at least, five times three days', because it was so far decomposed that Beauvais had great difficulty in recognizing it. This latter point, however, was fully disproved. I continue the translation:

'What, then, are the facts on which M. Beauvais says that he has no doubt the body was that of Marie Roget?

He ripped up the gown sleeve, and says he found marks which satisfied him of the identity. The public generally supposed those marks to have consisted of some description of scars. He rubbed the arm and found *hair* upon it—something as indefinite, we think, as can readily be imagined—as little conclusive as finding an arm in the sleeve. M. Beauvais did not return that night, but sent word to Madame Rogêt, at seven o'clock, on Wednesday evening, that an investigation was still in progress respecting her daughter. If we allow that Madame Rogêt, from her age and grief, could not go over (which is allowing a great deal), there certainly must have been some one who would have thought it worth while to go over and attend the investigation, if they thought the body was that of Marie. Nobody went over. There was nothing said or heard about the matter in the Rue Pavée St. Andrée, that reached even the occupants of the same building. M. St. Eustache, the lover and intended husband of Marie, who boarded in her mother's house, deposes that he did not hear of the discovery of the body of his intended until the next morning, when M. Beauvais came into his chamber and told him of it. For an item of news like this, it strikes us it was very coolly received.'

In this way the journal endeavoured to create the impression of an apathy on the part of the relatives of Marie, inconsistent with the supposition that these relatives believed the corpse to be hers. Its insinuations amount to this:—that Marie, with the connivance of her friends, had absented herself from the city for reasons involving a charge against her chastity; and that these friends, upon the discovery of a corpse in the Seine, somewhat resembling that of the girl, had availed themselves of the opportunity to impress the public with the belief of her death. But 'L'Étoile' was again over-hasty.

It was distinctly proved that no apathy, such as was imagined, existed; that the old lady was exceedingly feeble, and so agitated as to be unable to attend to any duty; that St. Eustache, so far from receiving the news coolly, was distracted with grief, and bore himself so frantically, that M. Beauvais prevailed upon a friend and relative to take charge of him, and prevent his attending the examination at the disinterment. Moreover, although it was stated by 'L'Étoile' that the corpse was re-interred at the public expense—that an advantageous offer of private sepulture was absolutely declined by the family—and that no member of the family attended the ceremonial:—although, I say, all this was asserted by 'L'Étoile' in furtherance of the impression it designed to convey—yet *all* this was satisfactorily disproved. In a subsequent number of the paper, an attempt was made to throw suspicion upon Beauvais himself, The editor says:

'Now, then, a change comes over the matter. We are told that, on one occasion, while a Madame B—— was at Madame Rogêt's house, M. Beauvais, who was going out, told her that a *gendarme* was expected there, and that she, Madame B., must not say anything to the *gendarme* until he returned, but let the matter be for him. .... In the present posture of affairs, M. Beauvais appears to have the whole matter locked up in his head. A single step cannot be taken without M. Beauvais; for, go which way you will, you run against him. ..... For some reason, he determined that nobody shall have any thing to do with the proceedings but himself, and he has elbowed the male relatives out of the way, according to their representations, in a very singular manner. He seems to have been very much averse to permitting the relatives to see the body.'

By the following fact, some colour was given to the suspicion thus thrown upon Beauvais. A visitor at his office, a few days prior to the girl's disappearance, and during the absence of its occupant, had observed *a rose* in the key-hole of the door, and the name '*Marie*' inscribed upon a slate which hung near at hand.

The general impression, so far as we were enabled to glean it from the newspapers, seemed to be, that Marie had been the victim of *a gang* of desperadoes —that by these she had been borne across the river, maltreated and murdered. 'Le Commerciel',[1] however, a print of extensive influence, was earnest in combating this popular idea. I quote a passage or two from its columns:

'We are persuaded that pursuit has hitherto been on a false scent, so far as it has been directed to the Barrière du Roule. It is impossible that a person so well known to thousands as this young woman was, should have passed three blocks without some one having seen her; and any one who saw her would have remembered it, for she interested all who knew her. It was when the streets were full of people, that she went out. . . . It is impossible that she could have gone to the Barrière du Roule, or to the Rue des Drômes, without being recognized by a dozen persons; yet no one has come forward who saw her outside of her mother's door, and there is no evidence, except the testimony concerning her *expressed intentions*, that she did go out at all. Her gown was torn, bound round her, and tied; and by that the body was carried as a bundle. If the murder had been committed at the Barrière du Roule, there would have been no necessity for any such arrangement. The fact that the body was found floating near the Barrière, is

[1] N. Y. 'Journal of Commerce'.

no proof as to where it was thrown into the water. . . . . A piece of one of the unfortunate girl's petticoats, two feet long and one foot wide, was torn out and tied under her chin around the back of her head, probably to prevent screams. This was done by fellows who had no pocket-handkerchief.'

A day or two before the Prefect called upon us, however, some important information reached the police, which seemed to overthrow, at least, the chief portion of 'Le Commerciel's' argument. Two small boys, sons of a Madame Deluc, while roaming among the woods near the Barrière du Roule, chanced to penetrate a close thicket, within which were three or four large stones, forming a kind of seat, with a back and footstool. On the upper stone lay a white petticoat; on the second a silk scarf. A parasol, gloves, and a pocket-handkerchief were also here found. The handkerchief bore the name 'Marie Rogêt'. Fragments of dress were discovered on the brambles around. The earth was trampled, the bushes were broken, and there was every evidence of a struggle. Between the thicket and the river, the fences were found taken down, and the ground bore evidence of some heavy burthen having been dragged along it.

A weekly paper, 'Le Soleil',[1] had the following comments upon this discovery—comments which merely echoed the sentiment of the whole Parisian press:

'The things had all evidently been there at least three or four weeks; they were all mildewed down hard with the action of the rain, and stuck together from mildew. The grass had grown around and over some of them.

[1] Phil. 'Sat. Evening Post', edited by C. J. Peterson, Esq.

The silk on the parasol was strong, but the threads of it were run together within. The upper part, where it had been doubled and folded, was all mildewed and rotten, and tore on its being opened. . . . . The pieces of her frock torn out by the bushes were about three inches wide and six inches long. One part was the hem of the frock, and it had been mended; the other piece was part of the skirt, not the hem. They looked like strips torn off, and were on the thorn bush, about a foot from the ground. . . . . There can be no doubt, therefore, that the spot of this appalling outrage has been discovered.'

Consequent upon this discovery, new evidence appeared. Madame Deluc testified that she keeps a roadside inn not far from the bank of the river, opposite the Barrière du Roule. The neighbourhood is secluded particularly so. It is the usual Sunday resort of blackguards from the city, who cross the river in boats. About three o'clock, in the afternoon of the Sunday in question, a young girl arrived at the inn, accompanied by a young man of dark complexion. The two remained here for some time. On their departure, they took the road to some thick woods in the vicinity. Madame Deluc's attention was called to the dress worn by the girl, on account of its resemblance to one worn by a deceased relative. A scarf was particularly noticed. Soon after the departure of the couple, a gang of miscreants made their appearance, behaved boisterously, ate and drank without making payment, followed in the route of the young man and girl, returned to the inn about dusk, and recrossed the river as if in great haste.

It was soon after dark, upon this same evening, that Madame Deluc, as well as her eldest son, heard the screams of a female in the vicinity of the inn.

The screams were violent but brief. Madame D. recognized not only the scarf which was found in the thicket, but the dress which was discovered upon the corpse. An omnibus-driver, Valence,[1] now also testified that he saw Marie Rogêt cross a ferry on the Seine, on the Sunday in question, in company with a young man of dark complexion. He, Valence, knew Marie, and could not be mistaken in her identity. The articles found in the thicket were fully identified by the relatives of Marie.

The items of evidence and information thus collected by myself, from the newspapers, at the suggestion of Dupin, embraced only one more point —but this was a point of seemingly vast consequence. It appears that, immediately after the discovery of the clothes as above described, the lifeless, or nearly lifeless body of St. Eustache, Marie's betrothed, was found in the vicinity of what all now supposed the scene of the outrage. A phial labelled 'laudanum', and emptied, was found near him. His breath gave evidence of the poison. He died without speaking. Upon his person was found a letter, briefly stating his love for Marie, with his design of self-destruction.

'I need scarcely tell you,' said Dupin, as he finished the perusal of my notes, 'that this is a far more intricate case than that of the Rue Morgue; from which it differs in one important respect. This is an *ordinary*, although an atrocious instance of crime. There is nothing peculiarly *outré* about it. You will observe that, for this reason, the mystery has been considered easy, when, for this reason, it should have been considered difficult, of solution.

[1] Adam.

Thus, at first, it was thought unnecessary to offer a reward. The myrmidons of G—— were able at once to comprehend how and why such an atrocity *might have been* committed. They could picture to their imaginations a mode—many modes—and a motive —many motives; and because it was not impossible that either of these numerous modes and motives *could* have been the actual one, they have taken it for granted that one of them *must*. But the ease with which these variable fancies were entertained, and the very plausibility which each assumed, should have been understood as indicative rather of the difficulties than of the facilities which must attend elucidation. I have before observed that it is by prominences above the plane of the ordinary, that reason feels her way, if at all, in her search for the true, and that the proper question in cases such as this, is not so much "what has occurred?" as "what has occurred that has never occurred before?" In the investigations at the house of Madame L'Espanaye,[1] the agents of G—— were discouraged and confounded by that very *unusualness* which, to a properly regulated intellect, would have afforded the surest omen of success; while this same intellect might have been plunged in despair at the ordinary character of all that met the eye in the case of the perfumery-girl, and yet told of nothing but easy triumph to the functionaries of the Prefecture.

'In the case of Madame L'Espanaye and her daughter, there was, even at the beginning of our investigation, no doubt that murder had been committed. The idea of suicide was excluded at once.

[1] See 'Murders in the Rue Morgue'.

Here, too, we are freed, at the commencement, from all supposition of self-murder. The body found at the Barrière du Roule, was found under such circumstances as to leave us no room for embarrassment upon this important point. But it has been suggested that the corpse discovered is not that of the Marie Rogêt for the conviction of whose assassin, or assassins, the reward is offered, and respecting whom, solely, our agreement has been arranged with the Prefect. We both know this gentleman well. It will not do to trust him too far. If, dating our inquiries from the body found, and thence tracing a murderer, we yet discover this body to be that of some other individual than Marie; or, if starting from the living Marie, we find her, yet find her unassassinated—in either case we lose our labour; since it is Monsieur G —— with whom we have to deal. For our own purpose, therefore, if not for the purpose of justice, it is indispensable that our first step should be the determination of the identity of the corpse with the Marie Rogêt who is missing.

With the public the arguments of "L'Étoile" have had weight; and that the journal itself is convinced of their importance would appear from the manner in which it commences one of its essays upon the subject —"Several of the morning papers of the day", it says, "speak of the *conclusive* article in Monday's 'Étoile'." To me, this article appears conclusive of little beyond the zeal of its inditer. We should bear in mind that, in general, it is the object of our newspapers rather to create a sensation—to make a point—than to further the cause of truth. The latter end is only pursued when it

seems coincident with the former. The print which merely falls in with ordinary opinion (however well founded this opinion may be) earns for itself no credit with the mob. The mass of the people regard as profound only him who suggests *pungent contradictions* of the general idea. In ratiocination, not less than in literature, it is the *epigram* which is the most immediately and the most universally appreciated. In both, it is of the lowest order of merit.

'What I mean to say is, that it is the mingled epigram and melodrame of the idea, that Marie Rogêt still lives, rather than any true plausibility in this idea, which have suggested it to "L'Étoile", and secured it a favourable reception with the public. Let us examine the heads of this journal's argument; endeavouring to avoid the incoherence with which it is originally set forth.

'The first aim of the writer is to show, from the brevity of the interval between Marie's disappearance and the finding of the floating corpse, that this corpse cannot be that of Marie. The reduction of this interval to its smallest possible dimension, becomes thus, at once, an object with the reasoner. In the rash pursuit of this object, he rushes into mere assumption at the outset. "It is folly to suppose", he says, "that the murder, if murder was committed on her body, could have been consummated soon enough to have enabled her murderers to throw the body into the river before midnight." We demand at once, and very naturally, *why?* Why is it folly to suppose that the murder was committed *within five minutes* after the girl's quitting her mother's house? Why is it folly to suppose that the murder was committed at any given period of

the day? There have been assassinations at all hours. But, had the murder taken place at any moment between nine o'clock in the morning of Sunday, and a quarter before midnight, there would still have been time enough "to throw the body into the river before midnight". This assumption, then, amounts precisely to this—that the murder was not committed on Sunday at all—and, if we allow "L'Étoile" to assume this, we may permit it any liberties whatever. The paragraph beginning "It is folly to suppose that the murder, &c.", however it appears as printed in "L'Étoile", may be imagined to have existed actually *thus* in the brain of its inditer—"It is folly to suppose that the murder, if murder was committed on the body, could have been committed soon enough to have enabled her murderers to throw the body into the river before midnight; it is folly, we say, to suppose all this, and to suppose at the same time (as we are resolved to suppose) that the body was *not* thrown in until *after* midnight"—a sentence sufficiently inconsequential in itself, but not so utterly preposterous as the one printed.

'Were it my purpose', continued Dupin, 'merely to *make out a case* against this passage of "L'Étoile's" argument, I might safely leave it where it is. It is not, however, with "L'Étoile" that we have to do, but with the truth. The sentence in question has but one meaning, as it stands; and this meaning I have fairly stated: but it is material that we go behind the mere words, for an idea which these words have obviously intended, and failed to convey. It was the design of the journalist to say that, at whatever period of the day or night of Sunday this

murder was committed, it was improbable that the assassins would have ventured to bear the corpse to the river before midnight. And herein lies, really, the assumption of which I complain. It is assumed that the murder was committed at such a position, and under such circumstances, that *the bearing it* to the river became necessary. Now, the assassination might have taken place upon the river's brink, or on the river itself; and, thus, the throwing the corpse in the water might have been resorted to, at any period of the day or night, as the most obvious and most immediate mode of disposal. You will understand that I suggest nothing here as probable, or as coincident with my own opinion. My design, so far, has no reference to the *facts* of the case. I wish merely to caution you against the whole tone of "L'Étoile's" *suggestion*, by calling your attention to its *ex parte* character at the outset.

'Having prescribed thus a limit to suit its own preconceived notions; having assumed that, if this were the body of Marie, it could have been in the water but a very brief time; the journal goes on to say:

"All experience has shown that drowned bodies, or bodies thrown into the water immediately after death by violence, require from six to ten days for sufficient decomposition to take place to bring them to the top of the water. Even when a cannon is fired over a corpse, and it rises before at least five or six days' immersion, it sinks again if let alone."

'These assertions have been tacitly received by every paper in Paris, with the exception of "Le Moniteur".[1] This latter print endeavours to com-

[1] The 'N. Y. Commercial Advertiser', edited by Col. Stone.

bat that portion of the paragraph which has reference to "drowned bodies" only, by citing some five or six instances in which the bodies of individuals known to be drowned were found floating after the lapse of less time than is insisted upon by "L'Étoile". But there is something excessively unphilosophical in the attempt on the part of "Le Moniteur", to rebut the general assertion of "L'Étoile", by a citation of particular instances militating against that assertion. Had it been possible to adduce fifty instead of five examples of bodies found floating at the end of two or three days, these fifty examples could still have been properly regarded only as exceptions to "L'Étoile's" rule, until such time as the rule itself should be confuted. Admitting the rule (and this "Le Moniteur" does not deny, insisting merely upon its exceptions), the argument of "L'Étoile" is suffered to remain in full force; for this argument does not pretend to involve more than a question of the *probability* of the body having risen to the surface in less than three days; and this probability will be in favour of "L'Étoile's" position until the instances so childishly adduced shall be sufficient in number to establish an antagonistical rule.

'You will see at once that all argument upon this head should be urged, if at all, against the rule itself; and for this end we must examine the *rationale* of the rule. Now the human body, in general, is neither much lighter nor much heavier than the water of the Seine: that is to say, the specific gravity of the human body, in its natural condition, is about equal to the bulk of fresh water which it displaces. The bodies of fat and fleshy persons, with

small bones, and of women generally, are lighter than those of the lean and large-boned, and of men; and the specific gravity of the water of a river is somewhat influenced by the presence of the tide from sea. But, leaving this tide out of question, it may be said that *very* few human bodies will sink at all, even in fresh water, *of their own accord*. Almost any one, falling into a river, will be enabled to float, if he suffer the specific gravity of the water fairly to be adduced in comparison with his own—that is to say, if he suffer his whole person to be immersed, with as little exception as possible. The proper position for one who cannot swim, is the upright position of the walker on land, with the head thrown fully back, and immersed; the mouth and nostrils alone remaining above the surface. Thus circumstanced, we shall find that we float without difficulty and without exertion. It is evident, however, that the gravities of the body, and of the bulk of water displaced, are very nicely balanced, and that a trifle will cause either to preponderate. An arm, for instance, uplifted from the water, and thus deprived of its support, is an additional weight sufficient to immerse the whole head, while the accidental aid of the smallest piece of timber will enable us to elevate the head so as to look about. Now, in the struggles of one unused to swimming, the arms are invariably thrown upwards, while an attempt is made to keep the head in its usual perpendicular position. The result is the immersion of the mouth and nostrils, and the inception, during efforts to breathe while beneath the surface, of water into the lungs. Much is also received into the stomach, and the whole body becomes heavier by

the difference between the weight of the air originally distending these cavities, and that of the fluid which now fills them. This difference is sufficient to cause the body to sink, as a general rule; but is insufficient in the cases of individuals with small bones and an abnormal quantity of flaccid or fatty matter. Such individuals float even after drowning.

'The corpse, being supposed at the bottom of the river, will there remain until, by some means, its specific gravity again becomes less than that of the bulk of water which it displaces. This effect is brought about by decomposition, or otherwise. The result of decomposition is the generation of gas, distending the cellular tissues and all the cavities, and giving the *puffed* appearance which is so horrible. When this distension has so far progressed that the bulk of the corpse is materially increased without a corresponding increase of *mass* or weight, its specific gravity becomes less than that of the water displaced, and it forthwith makes its appearance at the surface. But decomposition is modified by innumerable circumstances—is hastened or retarded by innumerable agencies; for example, by the heat or cold of the season, by the mineral impregnation or purity of the water, by its depth or shallowness, by its currency or stagnation, by the temperament of the body, by its infection or freedom from disease before death. Thus it is evident that we can assign no period, with anything like accuracy, at which the corpse shall rise through decomposition. Under certain conditions this result would be brought about within an hour; under others, it might not take place at all. There

are chemical infusions by which the animal frame can be preserved *for ever* from corruption; the Bichloride of Mercury is one. But, apart from decomposition, there may be, and very usually is, a generation of gas within the stomach, from the acetous fermentation of vegetable matter (or within other cavities from other causes) sufficient to induce a distension which will bring the body to the surface. The effect produced by the firing of a cannon is that of simple vibration. This may either loosen the corpse from the soft mud or ooze in which it is imbedded, thus permitting it to rise when other agencies have already prepared it for so doing; or it may overcome the tenacity of some putrescent portions of the cellular tissue; allowing the cavities to distend under the influence of the gas.

'Having thus before us the whole philosophy of this subject, we can easily test by it the assertions of "L'Étoile". "All experience shows," says this paper, "that drowned bodies, or bodies thrown into the water immediately after death by violence, require from six to ten days for sufficient decomposition to take place to bring them to the top of the water. Even when a cannon is fired over a corpse, and it rises before at least five or six days' immersion, it sinks again if left alone."

'The whole of this paragraph must now appear a tissue of inconsequence and incoherence. All experience does *not* show that "drowned bodies" *require* from six to ten days for sufficient decomposition to take place to bring them to the surface. Both science and experience show that the period of their rising is, and necessarily must be, indeterminate. If, moreover, a body has risen to the sur-

face through firing of cannon, it will *not* "sink again if left alone", until decomposition has so far progressed as to permit the escape of the generated gas. But I wish to call your attention to the distinction which is made between "drowned bodies", and "bodies thrown into the water immediately after death by violence". Although the writer admits the distinction, he yet includes them all in the same category. I have shown how it is that the body of a drowning man becomes specifically heavier than its bulk of water, and that he would not sink at all, except for the struggles by which he elevates his arms above the surface, and his gasps for breath while beneath the surface—gasps which supply by water the place of the original air in the lungs. But these struggles and these gasps would not occur in the body "thrown into the water immediately after death by violence". Thus, in the latter instance, *the body, as a general rule, would not sink at all*—a fact of which "L'Étoile" is evidently ignorant. When decomposition had proceeded to a very great extent—when the flesh had in a great measure left the bones—then, indeed, but not *till* then, should we lose sight of the corpse.

'And now what are we to make of the argument, that the body found could not be that of Marie Rogêt, because three days only having elapsed, this body was found floating? If drowned, being a woman, she might never have sunk; or having sunk, might have reappeared in twenty-four hours, or less. But no one supposes her to have been drowned; and, dying before being thrown into the river, she might have been found floating at any period afterwards whatever.

"'But," says "L'Étoile", "if the body had been kept in its mangled state on shore until Tuesday night, some trace would be found on shore of the murderers." Here it is at first difficult to perceive the intention of the reasoner. He means to anticipate what he imagines would be an objection to this theory – viz. that the body was kept on shore two days, suffering rapid decomposition—*more* rapid than if immersed in water. He supposes that, had this been the case, it *might* have appeared at the surface on the Wednesday, and thinks that *only* under such circumstances it could so have appeared. He is accordingly in haste to show that it *was not* kept on shore; for, if so, "some trace would be found on shore of the murderers". I presume you smile at the *sequitur*. You cannot be made to see how the mere *duration* of the corpse on the shore could operate to *multiply traces* of the assassins. Nor can I.

"'And furthermore it is exceedingly improbable," continues our journal, "that any villains who had committed such a murder as is here supposed, would have thrown the body in without weight to sink it, when such a precaution could have so easily been taken." Observe, here, the laughable confusion of thought! No one – not even "L'Étoile" – disputes the murder committed *on the body found*. The marks of violence are too obvious. It is our reasoner's object merely to show that this body is not Marie's. He wishes to prove that *Marie* is not assassinated – not that the corpse was not. Yet his observation proves only the latter point. Here is a corpse without weight attached. Murderers, casting it in, would not have failed to attach a weight.

Therefore it was not thrown in by murderers. This is all which is proved, if anything is. The question of identity is not even approached, and "L'Étoile" has been at great pains merely to gainsay now what it has admitted only a moment before. "We are perfectly convinced", it says, "that the body found was that of a murdered female."

'Nor is this the sole instance, even in this division of his subject, where our reasoner unwittingly reasons against himself. His evident object, I have already said, is to reduce, as much as possible, the interval between Marie's disappearance and the finding of the corpse. Yet we find him *urging* the point that no person saw the girl from the moment of her leaving her mother's house. "We have no evidence", he says, "that Marie Rogêt was in the land of the living after nine o'clock on Sunday, June the twenty-second." As his argument is obviously an *ex parte* one, he should, at least, have left this matter out of sight; for had any one been known to see Marie, say on Monday, or on Tuesday, the interval in question would have been much reduced, and, by his own ratiocination, the probability much diminished of the corpse being that of the *grisette*. It is, nevertheless, amusing to observe that "L'Étoile" insists upon its point in the full belief of its furthering its general argument.

'Reperuse now that portion of this argument which has reference to the identification of the corpse by Beauvais. In regard to the *hair* upon the arm, "L'Étoile" has been obviously disingenuous. M. Beauvais, not being an idiot, could never have urged, in identification of the corpse, simply *hair upon its arm*. No arm is *without* hair. The *generality*

of the expression of "L'Étoile" is a mere perversion of the witness' phraseology. He must have spoken of some *peculiarity* in this hair. It must have been a peculiarity of colour, of quantity, of length, or of situation.

"'Her foot", says the journal, "was small—so are thousands of feet. Her garter is no proof whatever—nor is her shoe—for shoes and garters are sold in packages. The same may be said of the flowers in her hat. One thing upon which M. Beauvais strongly insists is that the clasp on the garter found, had been set back to take it in. This amounts to nothing; for most women find it proper to take a pair of garters home and fit them to the size of the limbs they are to encircle, rather than to try them in the store where they purchase." Here it is difficult to suppose the reasoner in earnest. Had M. Beauvais, in his search for the body of Marie, discovered a corpse corresponding in general size and appearance to the missing girl, he would have been warranted (without reference to the question of habiliment at all) in forming an opinion that his search had been successful. If, in addition to the point of general size and contour, he had found upon the arm a peculiar hairy appearance which he had observed upon the living Marie, his opinion might have been justly strengthened; and the increase of positiveness might well have been in the ratio of the peculiarity, or unusualness, of the hairy mark. If, the feet of Marie being small, those of the corpse were also small, the increase of probability that the body was that of Marie would not be an increase in a ratio merely arithmetical, but in one highly geometrical, or accumulative. Add to all this shoes

such as she had been known to wear upon the day of her disappearance, and, although these shoes may be "sold in packages", you so far augment the probability as to verge upon the certain. What, of itself, would be no evidence of identity, becomes through its corroborative position, proof most sure. Give us, then, flowers in the hat corresponding to those worn by the missing girl, and we seek for nothing farther. If only *one* flower, we seek for nothing farther—what then if two or three, or more? Each successive one is multiple evidence - proof not *added* to proof, but *multiplied* by hundreds or thousands. Let us now discover, upon the deceased, garters such as the living used, and it is almost folly to proceed. But these garters are found to be tightened, by the setting back of a clasp, in just such a manner as her own had been tightened by Marie, shortly previous to her leaving home. It is now madness or hypocrisy to doubt. What "L'Étoile" says in respect to this abbreviation of the garter's being an usual occurrence, shows nothing beyond its own pertinacity in error. The elastic nature of the clasp-garter is self-demonstration of the *unusualness* of the abbreviation. What is made to adjust itself, must of necessity require foreign adjustment but rarely. It must have been by an accident, in its strictest sense, that these garters of Marie needed the tightening described. They alone would have amply established her identity. But it is not that the corpse was found to have the garters of the missing girl, or found to have her shoes, or her bonnet, or the flowers of her bonnet, or her feet, or a peculiar mark upon the arm, or her general size and appearance—it is that the corpse had each,

and *all collectively*. Could it be proved that the editor of "L'Étoile" *really* entertained a doubt, under the circumstances, there would be no need, in his case, of a commission *de lunatico inquirendo*. He has thought it sagacious to echo the small talk of the lawyers, who, for the most part, content themselves with echoing the rectangular precepts of the court. I would here observe that very much of what is rejected as evidence by a court, is the best of evidence to the intellect. For the court, guiding itself by the general principles of evidence—the recognized and *booked* principles—is averse from swerving at particular instances. And this steadfast adherence to principle, with rigorous disregard of the conflicting exception, is a sure mode of attaining the *maximum* of attainable truth, in any long sequence of time. The practice, *in mass*, is therefore philosophical; but it is not the less certain that it engenders vast individual error.[1]

'In respect to the insinuations levelled at Beauvais, you will be willing to dismiss them in a breath. You have already fathomed the true character of this good gentleman. He is a *busy-body*, with much of romance and little of wit. Any one so constituted will readily so conduct himself, upon occasion

[1] 'A theory based on the qualities of an object, will prevent its being unfolded according to its objects; and he who arranges topics in reference to their causes, will cease to value them according to their results. Thus the jurisprudence of every nation will show that, when law becomes a science and a system, it ceases to be justice. The errors into which a blind devotion to *principles* of classification has led the common law, will be seen by observing how often the legislature has been obliged to come forward to restore the equity its scheme had lost.'—*Landor*.

of *real* excitement, as to render himself liable to suspicion on the part of the over acute, or the ill-disposed. M. Beauvais (as it appears from your notes) had some personal interviews with the editor of the "L'Étoile", and offended him by venturing an opinion that the corpse, notwithstanding the theory of the editor, was, in sober fact, that of Marie. "He persists", says the paper, "in asserting the corpse to be that of Marie, but cannot give a circumstance, in addition to those which we have commented upon, to make others believe." Now, without readverting to the fact that stronger evidence "to make others believe", could *never* have been adduced, it may be remarked that a man may very well be understood to believe, in a case of this kind, without the ability to advance a single reason for the belief of a second party. Nothing is more vague than impressions of individual identity. Each man recognizes his neighbour, yet there are few instances in which any one is prepared *to give a reason* for his recognition. The editor of "L'Étoile" had no right to be offended at M. Beauvais' unreasoning belief.

"The suspicious circumstances which invest him, will be found to tally much better with my hypothesis of *romantic busy bodyism*, than with the reasoner's suggestion of guilt. Once adopting the more charitable interpretation, we shall find no difficulty in comprehending the rose in the keyhole; the "Marie" upon the slate; the "elbowing the male relatives out of the way"; the "aversion to permitting them to see the body"; the caution given to Madame B——, that she must hold no conversation with the *gendarme* until his return

(Beauvais'); and, lastly, his apparent determination "that nobody should have anything to do with the proceedings except himself". It seems to me unquestionable that Beauvais was a suitor of Marie's; that she coquetted with him; and that he was ambitious of being thought to enjoy her fullest intimacy and confidence. I shall say nothing more upon this point; and, as the evidence fully rebuts the assertion of "L'Étoile", touching the matter of *apathy* on the part of the mother and other relatives --an apathy inconsistent with the supposition of their believing the corpse to be that of the perfumery-girl- -we shall now proceed as if the question of *identity* were settled to our perfect satisfaction.

'And what', I here demanded, 'do you think of the opinions of "Le Commerciel"?'

'That, in spirit, they are far more worthy of attention than any which have been promulgated upon the subject. The deductions from the premises are philosophical and acute; but the premises, in two instances, at least, are founded in imperfect observation. "Le Commerciel" wishes to intimate that Marie was seized by some gang of low ruffians not far from her mother's door. "It is impossible", it urges, "that a person so well known to thousands as this young woman was, should have passed three blocks without some one having seen her." This is the idea of a man long resident in Paris—a public man—and one whose walks to and fro in the city have been mostly limited to the vicinity of the public offices. He is aware that *he* seldom passes so far as a dozen blocks from his own *bureau* without being recognized and accosted. And, knowing the extent of his personal acquaintance with others,

and of others with him, he compares his notoriety with that of the perfumery-girl, finds no great difference between them, and reaches at once the conclusion that she, in her walks, would be equally liable to recognition with himself in his. This could only be the case were her walks of the same unvarying, methodical character, and within the same *species* of limited region as are his own. He passes to and fro, at regular intervals, within a confined periphery, abounding in individuals who are led to observation of his person through interest in the kindred nature of his occupation with their own. But the walks of Marie may, in general, be supposed discursive. In this particular instance, it will be understood as most probable that she proceeded upon a route of more than average diversity from her accustomed ones. The parallel which we imagine to have existed in the mind of "Le Commerciel" would only be sustained in the event of the two individuals traversing the whole city. In this case, granting the personal acquaintances to be equal, the chances would be also equal that an equal number of personal rencounters would be made. For my own part, I should hold it not only as possible, but as very far more than probable, that Marie might have proceeded, at any given period, by any one of the many routes between her own residence and that of her aunt, without meeting a single individual whom she knew, or by whom she was known. In viewing this question in its full and proper light, we must hold steadily in mind the great disproportion between the personal acquaintances of even the most noted individual in Paris, and the entire population of Paris itself.

'But whatever force there may still appear to be in the suggestion of "Le Commerciel", will be much diminished when we take into consideration *the hour* at which the girl went abroad. "It was when the streets were full of people," says "Le Commerciel", "that she went out." But not so. It was at nine o'clock in the morning. Now at nine o'clock of every morning in the week, *with the exception of Sunday*, the streets of the city are, it is true, thronged with people. At nine on Sunday, the populace are chiefly within doors *preparing for church*. No observing person can have failed to notice the peculiarly deserted air of the town, from about eight until ten on the morning of every Sabbath. Between ten and eleven the streets are thronged, but not at so early a period as that designated.

'There is another point at which there seems a deficiency of *observation* on the part of "Le Commerciel". "A piece", it says, "of one of the unfortunate girl's petticoats, two feet long, and one foot wide, was torn out and tied under her chin, and around the back of her head, probably to prevent screams. This was done by fellows who had no pocket-handkerchiefs." Whether this idea is, or is not well founded, we will endeavour to see hereafter; but by "fellows who have no pocket-handkerchiefs", the editor intends the lowest class of ruffians. These, however, are the very description of people who will always be found to have handkerchiefs even when destitute of shirts. You must have had occasion to observe how absolutely indispensable, of late years, to the thorough blackguard, has become the pocket-handkerchief.'

'And what are we to think', I asked, 'of the article in "Le Soleil"?'

'That it is a vast pity its inditer was not born a parrot—in which case he would have been the most illustrious parrot of his race. He has merely repeated the individual items of the already published opinion; collecting them, with a laudable industry, from this paper and from that. "The things had all *evidently* been there," he says, "at least, three or four weeks, and there can be *no doubt* that the spot of this appalling outrage has been discovered." The facts here restated by "Le Soleil" are very far indeed from removing my own doubts upon this subject, and we will examine them more particularly hereafter in connexion with another division of the theme.

'At present we must occupy ourselves with other investigations. You cannot fail to have remarked the extreme laxity of the examination of the corpse. To be sure, the question of identity was readily determined, or should have been; but there were other points to be ascertained. Had the body been in any respect *despoiled*? Had the deceased any articles of jewelry about her person upon leaving home? if so, had she any when found? These are important questions utterly untouched by the evidence; and there are others of equal moment, which have met with no attention. We must endeavour to satisfy ourselves by personal inquiry. The case of St. Eustache must be re-examined. I have no suspicion of this person; but let us proceed methodically. We will ascertain beyond a doubt the validity of the *affidavits* in regard to his whereabouts on the Sunday. Affidavits of this character

are readily made matter of mystification. Should there be nothing wrong here, however, we will dismiss St. Eustache from our investigations. His suicide, however corroborative of suspicion, were there found to be deceit in the affidavits, is, without such deceit, in no respect an unaccountable circumstance, or one which need cause us to deflect from the line of ordinary analysis.

'In that which I now propose, we will discard the interior points of this tragedy and concentrate our attention upon its outskirts. Not the least usual error, in investigations such as this, is the limiting of inquiry to the immediate, with total disregard of the collateral or circumstantial events. It is the malpractice of the courts to confine evidence and discussion to the bounds of apparent relevancy. Yet experience has shown, and a true philosophy will always show, that a vast, perhaps the larger portion of truth, arises from the seemingly irrelevant. It is through the spirit of this principle, if not precisely through its letter, that modern science has resolved to *calculate upon the unforeseen*. But perhaps you do not comprehend me. The history of human knowledge has so uninterruptedly shown that to collateral, or incidental, or accidental events we are indebted for the most numerous and most valuable discoveries, that it has at length become necessary, in any prospective view of improvement, to make not only large, but the largest allowances for inventions that shall arise by chance, and quite out of the range of ordinary expectation. It is no longer philosophical to base, upon what has been, a vision of what is to be. *Accident* is admitted as a portion of the substruc-

ture. We make chance a matter of absolute calculation. We subject the unlooked for and unimagined, to the mathematical *formulae* of the schools.

'I repeat that it is no more than fact, that the *larger* portion of all truth has sprung from the collateral; and it is but in accordance with the spirit of the principle involved in this fact, that I would divert inquiry, in the present case, from the trodden and hitherto unfruitful ground of the event itself, to the co-temporary circumstances which surround it. While you ascertain the validity of the affidavits, I will examine the newspapers more generally than you have as yet done. So far, we have only reconnoitred the field of investigation; but it will be strange indeed if a comprehensive survey, such as I propose, of the public prints, will not afford us some minute points which shall establish a *direction* for inquiry.'

In pursuance of Dupin's suggestion, I made scrupulous examination of the affair of the affidavits. The result was a firm conviction of their validity, and of the consequent innocence of St. Eustache. In the meantime my friend occupied himself, with what seemed to me a minuteness altogether objectless, in a scrutiny of the various newspaper files. At the end of a week he placed before me the following extracts:

'About three years and a half ago, a disturbance very similar to the present, was caused by the disappearance of this same Marie Rogêt, from the *parfumerie* of Monsieur Le Blanc, in the Palais Royal. At the end of a week, however, she reappeared at her customary *comptoir*, as well as ever, with the exception of a slight pale-

ness not altogether usual. It was given out by Monsieur Le Blanc and her mother, that she had merely been on a visit to some friend in the country; and the affair was speedily hushed up. We presume that the present absence is a freak of the same nature, and that, at the expiration of a week, or perhaps of a month, we shall have her among us again.'—*Evening Paper—Monday, June* 23.[1]

'An evening journal of yesterday, refers to a former mysterious disappearance of Mademoiselle Rogêt. It is well known that, during the week of her absence from Le Blanc's *parfumerie*, she was in the company of a young naval officer, much noted for his debaucheries. A quarrel, it is supposed, providentially led to her return home. We have the name of the Lothario in question, who is, at present, stationed in Paris, but, for obvious reasons, forbear to make it public.'—*Le Mercurie—Tuesday Morning, June* 24.[2]

'An outrage of the most atrocious character was perpetrated near this city the day before yesterday. A gentleman, with his wife and daughter, engaged, about dusk, the services of six young men, who were idly rowing a boat to and fro near the banks of the Seine, to convey him across the river. Upon reaching the opposite shore, the three passengers stepped out, and had proceeded so far as to be beyond the view of the boat, when the daughter discovered that she had left in it her parasol. She returned for it, was seized by the gang, carried out into the stream, gagged, brutally treated, and finally taken to the shore at a point not far from that at which she had originally entered the boat with her parents. The villains have escaped for the time, but the police are upon their trail, and some of them will soon be taken.'—*Morning Paper—June* 25.[3]

'We have received one or two communications, the

[1] 'N. Y. Express'. [2] 'N. Y. Herald'.
[3] 'N. Y. Courier and Inquirer'.

object of which is to fasten the crime of the late atrocity upon Mennais,[1] but as this gentleman has been fully exonerated by a legal inquiry, and as the arguments of our several correspondents appear to be more zealous than profound, we do not think it advisable to make them public.' *Morning Paper, June 28.*[2]

'We have received several forcibly written communications, apparently from various sources, and which go far to render it a matter of certainty that the unfortunate Marie Roget has become a victim of one of the numerous bands of blackguards which infest the vicinity of the city upon Sunday. Our own opinion is decidedly in favour of this supposition. We shall endeavour to make room for some of these arguments hereafter.' *Evening Paper, Tuesday, June 31.*[3]

'On Monday, one of the bargemen connected with the revenue service, saw an empty boat floating down the Seine. Sails were lying in the bottom of the boat. The bargemen towed it under the barge office. The next morning it was taken from thence, without the knowledge of any of the officers. The rudder is now at the barge office.' *Le Diligence, Thursday, June 26.*[4]

Upon reading these various extracts, they not only seemed to me irrelevant, but I could perceive no mode in which any one of them could be brought to bear upon the matter in hand. I waited for some explanation from Dupin.

'It is not my present design', he said, 'to *dwell* upon the first and second of these extracts. I have copied them chiefly to show you the extreme remissness of the police, who, as far as I can understand from the Prefect, have not troubled themselves

[1] Mennais was one of the parties originally suspected and arrested, but discharged through total lack of evidence.

[2] 'N. Y. Courier and Inquirer'.

[3] 'N. Y. Evening Post'. [4] 'N. Y. Standard'.

selves, in any respect, with an examination of the naval officer alluded to. Yet it is mere folly to say that between the first and second disappearance of Marie, there is no *supposable* connexion. Let us admit the first elopement to have resulted in a quarrel between the lovers, and the return home of the betrayed. We are now prepared to view a second *elopement* (if we *know* that an elopement has again taken place) as indicating a renewal of the betrayer's advances, rather than as the result of new proposals by a second individual—we are prepared to regard it as a "making up" of the old *amour*, rather than as the commencement of a new one. The chances are ten to one, that he who had once eloped with Marie, would again propose an elopement, rather than that she to whom proposals of elopement had been made by one individual, should have them made to her by another. And here let me call your attention to the fact, that the time elapsing between the first ascertained, and the second supposed elopement, is a few months more than the general period of the cruises of our men-of-war. Had the lover been interrupted in his first villainy by the necessity of departure to sea, and had he seized the first moment of his return to renew the base designs not yet altogether accomplished—or not altogether accomplished *by him*? Of all these things we know nothing.

'You will say, however, that, in the second instance, there was *no* elopement as imagined. Certainly not—but are we prepared to say that there was not the frustrated design? Beyond St. Eustache, and perhaps Beauvais, we find no recognized, no open, no honourable suitors of Marie. Of

none other is there anything said. Who, then, is the secret lover, of whom the relatives (*at least most of them*) know nothing, but whom Marie meets upon the morning of Sunday, and who is so deeply in her confidence that she hesitates not to remain with him until the shades of the evening descend, amid the solitary groves of the Barrière du Roule? Who is that secret lover, I ask, of whom, at least, *most* of the relatives know nothing? And what means the singular prophecy of Madame Rogêt on the morning of Marie's departure? "I fear that I shall never see Marie again."

'But if we cannot imagine Madame Rogêt privy to the design of elopement, may we not at least suppose this design entertained by the girl? Upon quitting home, she gave it to be understood that she was about to visit her aunt in the Rue des Drômes, and St. Eustache was requested to call for her at dark. Now, at first glance, this fact strongly militates against my suggestion; but let us reflect. That she *did* meet some companion, and proceed with him across the river, reaching the Barrière du Roule at so late an hour as three o'clock in the afternoon, is known. But in consenting so to accompany this individual (*for whatever purpose—to her mother known or unknown*), she must have thought of her expressed intention when leaving home, and of the surprise and suspicion aroused in the bosom of her affianced suitor, St. Eustache, when, calling for her, at the hour appointed, in the Rue des Dromes, he should find that she had not been there, and when, moreover, upon returning to the *pension* with this alarming intelligence, he should become aware of her continued absence from home. She must

have thought of these things, I say. She must have foreseen the chagrin of St. Eustache, the suspicion of all. She could not have thought of returning to brave this suspicion; but the suspicion becomes a point of trivial importance to her, if we suppose her *not* intending to return.

'We may imagine her thinking thus—"I am to meet a certain person for the purpose of elopement, or for certain other purposes known only to myself. It is necessary that there be no chance of interruption—there must be sufficient time given us to elude pursuit—I will give it to be understood that I shall visit and spend the day with my aunt at the Rue des Dromes—I will tell St. Eustache not to call for me until dark—in this way, my absence from home for the longest possible period, without causing suspicion or anxiety, will be accounted for, and I shall gain more time than in any other manner. If I bid St. Eustache call for me at dark, he will be sure not to call before; but, if I wholly neglect to bid him call, my time for escape will be diminished, since it will be expected that I return the earlier, and my absence will the sooner excite anxiety. Now, if it were my design to return *at all*—if I had in contemplation merely a stroll with the individual in question—it would not be my policy to bid St. Eustache call, for, calling, he will be *sure* to ascertain that I have played him false—a fact of which I might keep him for ever in ignorance, by leaving home without notifying him of my intention, by returning before dark, and by then stating that I had been to visit my aunt in the Rue des Dromes. But, as it is my design *never* to return—or not for some weeks—or not until certain concealments are

effected — the gaining of time is the only point about which I need give myself any concern."

'You have observed in your notes, that the most general opinion in relation to this sad affair is, and was from the first, that the girl had been the victim of *a gang* of blackguards. Now, the popular opinion, under certain conditions, is not to be disregarded. When arising of itself—when manifesting itself in a strictly spontaneous manner—we should look upon it as analogous with that *intuition* which is the idiosyncrasy of the individual man of genius. In ninety-nine cases from the hundred I would abide by its decision. But it is important that we find no palpable traces of *suggestion*. The opinion must be rigorously *the public's own*; and the distinction is often exceedingly difficult to perceive and to maintain. In the present instance, it appears to me that this "public opinion", in respect to *a gang*, has been superinduced by the collateral event which is detailed in the third of my extracts. All Paris is excited by the discovered corpse of Marie, a girl young beautiful and notorious. This corpse is found, bearing marks of violence, and floating in the river. But it is now made known that, at the very period, or about the very period, in which it is supposed that the girl was assassinated, an outrage similar in nature to that endured by the deceased, although less in extent, was perpetrated, by a gang of young ruffians, upon the person of a second young female. Is it wonderful that the one known atrocity should influence the popular judgement in regard to the other unknown? This judgement awaited direction, and the known outrage seemed so opportunely to afford it! Marie, too, was found in the river, and

upon this very river was this known outrage committed. The connexion of the two events had about it so much of the palpable, that the true wonder would have been a *failure* of the populace to appreciate and to seize it. But, in fact, the one atrocity, known to be so committed, is, if anything, evidence that the other, committed at a time nearly coincident, was *not* so committed. It would have been a miracle indeed, if, while a gang of ruffians were perpetrating, at a given locality, a most unheard-of wrong, there should have been another similar gang, in a similar locality, in the same city, under the same circumstances, with the same means and appliances, engaged in a wrong of precisely the same aspect, at precisely the same period of time! Yet in what, if not in this marvellous train of coincidence, does the accidentally *suggested* opinion of the populace call upon us to believe?

'Before proceeding farther, let us consider the supposed scene of the assassination, in the thicket at the Barrière du Roule. This thicket, although dense, was in the close vicinity of a public road. Within were three or four large stones, forming a kind of seat with a back and footstool. On the upper stone was discovered a white petticoat; on the second, a silk scarf. A parasol, gloves, and a pocket-handkerchief, were also here found. The handkerchief bore the name, "Marie Rogêt". Fragments of dress were seen on the branches around. The earth was trampled, the bushes were broken, and there was every evidence of a violent struggle.

'Notwithstanding the acclamation with which the discovery of this thicket was received by the press, and the unanimity with which it was sup-

posed to indicate the precise scene of the outrage, it must be admitted that there was some very good reason for doubt. That it *was* the scene, I may or I may not believe—but there was excellent reason for doubt. Had the *true* scene been, as "Le Commerciel" suggested, in the neighbourhood of the Rue Pavée St. Andrée, the perpetrators of the crime, supposing them still resident in Paris, would naturally have been stricken with terror at the public attention thus acutely directed into the proper channel; and, in certain classes of minds, there would have arisen, at once, a sense of the necessity of some exertion to redivert this attention. And thus, the thicket of the Barrière du Roule having been already suspected, the idea of placing the articles where they were found, might have been naturally entertained. There is no real evidence, although "Le Soleil" so supposes, that the articles discovered had been more than a very few days in the thicket; while there is much circumstantial proof that they could not have remained there, without attracting attention, during the twenty days elapsing between the fatal Sunday and the afternoon upon which they were found by the boys. "They were all *mildewed* down hard", says "Le Soleil", adopting the opinions of its predecessors, "with the action of the rain, and stuck together from *mildew*. The grass had grown around and over some of them. The silk of the parasol was strong, but the threads of it were run together within. The upper part, where it had been doubled and folded, was all *mildewed* and rotten, and tore on being opened." In respect to the grass having "grown around and over some of them", it is obvious that

the fact could only have been ascertained from the words, and thus from the recollections, of two small boys; for these boys removed the articles and took them home before they had been seen by a third party. But grass will grow, especially in warm and damp weather (such as was that of the period of the murder), as much as two or three inches in a single day. A parasol lying upon a newly turfed ground, might, in a single week, be entirely concealed from sight by the upspringing grass. And touching that *mildew* upon which the editor of "Le Soleil" so pertinaciously insists, that he employs the word no less than three times in the brief paragraph just quoted, is he really unaware of the nature of this *mildew*? Is he to be told that it is one of the many classes of *fungus*, of which the most ordinary feature is its upspringing and decadence within twenty-four hours?

Thus we see, at a glance, that what has been most triumphantly adduced in support of the idea that the articles had been "for at least three or four weeks" in the thicket, is most absurdly null as regards any evidence of that fact. On the other hand, it is exceedingly difficult to believe that these articles could have remained in the thicket specified, for a longer period than a single week—for a longer period than from one Sunday to the next. Those who know anything of the vicinity of Paris, know the extreme difficulty of finding *seclusion*, unless at a great distance from its suburbs. Such a thing as an unexplored, or even an unfrequently visited recess, amid its woods or groves, is not for a moment to be imagined. Let any one who, being at heart a lover of nature, is yet chained by duty to the dust

and heat of this great metropolis—let any such one attempt, even during the weekdays, to slake his thirst for solitude amid the scenes of natural loveliness which immediately surround us. At every second step, he will find the growing charm dispelled by the voice and personal intrusion of some ruffian or party of carousing blackguards. He will seek privacy amid the densest foliage, all in vain. Here are the very nooks where the unwashed most abound—here are the temples most desecrate. With sickness of the heart the wanderer will flee back to the polluted Paris as to a less odious because less incongruous sink of pollution. But if the vicinity of the city is so beset during the working days of the week, how much more so on the Sabbath! It is now especially that, released from the claims of labour, or deprived of the customary opportunities of crime, the town blackguard seeks the precincts of the town, not through love of the rural, which in his heart he despises, but by way of escape from the restraints and conventionalities of society. He desires less the fresh air and the green trees, than the utter *license* of the country. Here, at the roadside inn, or beneath the foliage of the woods, he indulges unchecked by any eye except those of his boon companions, in all the mad excess of a counterfeit hilarity—the joint offspring of liberty and of rum. I say nothing more than what must be obvious to every dispassionate observer, when I repeat that the circumstance of the articles in question having remained undiscovered, for a longer period than from one Sunday to another, in *any* thicket in the immediate neighbourhood of Paris, is to be looked upon as little less than miraculous.

'But there are not wanting other grounds for the suspicion that the articles were placed in the thicket with the view of diverting attention from the real scene of the outrage. And, first, let me direct your notice to the *date* of the discovery of the articles. Collate this with the date of the fifth extract made by myself from the newspapers. You will find that the discovery followed, almost immediately, the urgent communications sent to the evening paper. These communications, although various, and apparently from various sources, tended all to the same point—viz. the directing of attention to *a gang* as the perpetrators of the outrage, and to the neighbourhood of the Barrière du Roule as its scene. Now here, of course, the suspicion is not that, in consequence of these communications, or of the public attention by them directed, the articles were found by the boys; but the suspicion might and may well have been, that the articles were not *before* found by the boys, for the reason that the articles had not before been in the thicket; having been deposited there only at so late a period as at the date, or shortly prior to the date of the communications, by the guilty authors of these communications themselves.

'This thicket was a singular—an exceedingly singular one. It was unusually dense. Within its naturally walled enclosure were three extraordinary stones, *forming a seat with a back and footstool*. And this thicket, so full of a natural art, was in the immediate vicinity, *within a few rods*, of the dwelling of Madame Deluc, whose boys were in the habit of closely examining the shrubberies about them in search of the bark of the sassafras. Would it be a

rash wager—a wager of one thousand to one—that *a day* never passed over the heads of these boys without finding at least one of them ensconced in the umbrageous hall, and enthroned upon its natural throne? Those who would hesitate at such a wager, have either never been boys themselves, or have forgotten the boyish nature. I repeat—it is exceedingly hard to comprehend how the articles could have remained in this thicket undiscovered, for a longer period than one or two days; and that thus there is good ground for suspicion, in spite of the dogmatic ignorance of "Le Soleil", that they were, at a comparatively late date, deposited where found.

'But there are still other and stronger reasons for believing them so deposited, than any which I have as yet urged. And, now, let me beg your notice to the highly artificial arrangement of the articles. On the *upper* stone lay a white petticoat; on the *second* a silk scarf; scattered around, were a parasol, gloves, and a pocket-handkerchief bearing the name, "Marie Rogêt". Here is just such an arrangement as would *naturally* be made by a not-over-acute person wishing to dispose the articles *naturally*. But it is by no means a *really* natural arrangement. I should rather have looked to see the things *all* lying on the ground and trampled under foot. In the narrow limits of that bower, it would have been scarcely possible that the petticoat and scarf should have retained a position upon the stones, when subjected to the brushing to and fro of many struggling persons. "There was evidence", it is said, "of a struggle; and the earth was trampled, the bushes were broken,"—but the petticoat and the

scarf are found deposited as if upon shelves. "The pieces of the frock torn out by the bushes were about three inches wide and six inches long. One part was the hem of the frock and it had been mended. They *looked like strips torn off*." Here, inadvertently, "Le Soleil" has employed an exceedingly suspicious phrase. The pieces, as described, do indeed "look like strips torn off"; but purposely and by hand. It is one of the rarest of accidents that a piece is "torn off", from any garment such as is now in question, by the agency *of a thorn*. From the very nature of such fabrics, a thorn or nail becoming entangled in them, tears them rectangularly—divides them into two longitudinal rents, at right angles with each other, and meeting at an apex where the thorn enters—but it is scarcely possible to conceive the piece "torn off". I never so knew it, nor did you. To tear a piece *off* from such fabric, two distinct forces, in different directions, will be, in almost every case, required. If there be two edges to the fabric—if, for example, it be a pocket-handkerchief, and it is desired to tear from it a slip, then, and then only, will the one force serve the purpose. But in the present case the question is of a dress, presenting but one edge. To tear a piece from the interior, where no edge is presented, could only be effected by a miracle through the agency of thorns, and no *one* thorn could accomplish it. But, even where an edge is presented, two thorns will be necessary, operating, the one in two distinct directions, and the other in one. And this in the supposition that the edge is unhemmed. If hemmed, the matter is nearly out of the question. We thus see the numerous and great

obstacles in the way of pieces being "torn off" through the simple agency of "thorns"; yet we are required to believe not only that one piece but that many have been so torn. "And one part", too, "*was the hem of the frock*!" Another piece was "*part of the skirt, not the hem*"—that is to say, was torn completely out, through the agency of thorns, from the unedged interior of the dress! These, I say, are things which one may well be pardoned for disbelieving; yet, taken collectedly, they form, perhaps, less of reasonable ground for suspicion, than the one startling circumstance of the articles having been left in this thicket at all, by any *murderers* who had enough precaution to think of removing the corpse. You will not have apprehended me rightly, however, if you suppose it my design to *deny* this thicket as the scene of the outrage. There might have been a wrong *here*, or, more possibly, an accident at Madame Deluc's. But, in fact, this is a point of minor importance. We are not engaged in an attempt to discover the scene, but to produce the perpetrators of the murder. What I have adduced, notwithstanding the minuteness with which I have adduced it, has been with the view, first, to show the folly of the positive and headlong assertions of "Le Soleil", but secondly and chiefly, to bring you, by the most natural route, to a further contemplation of the doubt whether this assassination has, or has not been, the work of *a gang*.

'We will resume this question by mere allusion to the revolting details of the surgeon examined at the inquest. It is only necessary to say that his published *inferences*, in regard to the number of the

ruffians, have been properly ridiculed as unjust and totally baseless, by all the reputable anatomists of Paris. Not that the matter *might not* have been as inferred, but that there was no ground for the inference: —was there not much for another?

'Let us reflect now upon "the traces of a struggle"; and let me ask what these traces have been supposed to demonstrate. A gang. But do they not rather demonstrate the absence of a gang? What *struggle* could have taken place—what struggle so violent and so enduring as to have left its "traces" in all directions—between a weak and defenceless girl and the *gang* of ruffians imagined? The silent grasp of a few rough arms and all would have been over. The victim must have been absolutely passive at their will. You will here bear in mind that the arguments urged against the thicket as the scene, are applicable, in chief part, only against it as the scene of an outrage committed by *more than a single individual*. If we imagine but *one* violator, we can conceive, and thus only conceive, the struggle of so violent and so obstinate a nature as to have left the "traces" apparent.

'And again. I have already mentioned the suspicion to be excited by the fact that the articles in question were suffered to remain *at all* in the thicket where discovered. It seems almost impossible that these evidences of guilt should have been accidentally left where found. There was sufficient presence of mind (it is supposed) to remove the corpse; and yet a more positive evidence than the corpse itself (whose features might have been quickly obliterated by decay) is allowed to lie conspicuously in the scene of the outrage—I allude to the handkerchief with

the *name* of the deceased. If this was accident, it was not the accident *of a gang*. We can imagine it only the accident of an individual. Let us see. An individual has committed the murder. He is alone with the ghost of the departed. He is appalled by what lies motionless before him. The fury of his passion is over, and there is abundant room in his heart for the natural awe of the deed. His is none of that confidence which the presence of numbers inevitably inspires. He is *alone* with the dead. He trembles and is bewildered. Yet there is a necessity for disposing of the corpse. He bears it to the river, but leaves behind him the other evidences of guilt; for it is difficult, if not impossible to carry all the burthen at once, and it will be easy to return for what is left. But in his toilsome journey to the water his fears redouble within him. The sounds of life encompass his path. A dozen times he hears or fancies the step of an observer. Even the very lights from the city bewilder him. Yet, in time, and by long and frequent pauses of deep agony, he reaches the river's brink, and disposes of his ghastly charge—perhaps through the medium of a boat. But *now* what treasure does the world hold—what threat of vengeance could it hold out—which would have power to urge the return of that lonely murderer over that toilsome and perilous path, to the thicket and its blood-chilling recollections? He returns *not*, let the consequences be what they may. He *could* not return if he would. His sole thought is immediate escape. He turns his back *for ever* upon those dreadful shrubberies, and flees as from the wrath to come.

'But how with a gang? Their number would

have inspired them with confidence; if, indeed, confidence is ever wanting in the breast of the arrant blackguard; and of arrant blackguards alone are the supposed *gangs* ever constituted. Their number, I say, would have prevented the bewildering and unreasoning terror which I have imagined to paralyse the single man. Could we suppose an oversight in one, or two, or three, this oversight would have been remedied by a fourth. They would have left nothing behind them; for their number would have enabled them to carry *all* at once. There would have been no need of *return*.

'Consider now the circumstance that, in the outer garment of the corpse when found, "a slip, about a foot wide, had been torn upward from the bottom hem to the waist, wound three times round the waist, and secured by a sort of hitch in the back". This was done with the obvious design of affording *a handle* by which to carry the body. But would any *number* of men have dreamed of resorting to such an expedient? To three or four, the limbs of the corpse would have afforded not only a sufficient, but the best possible hold. The device is that of a single individual; and this brings us to the fact that "between the thicket and the river, the rails of the fences were found taken down, and the ground bore evident traces of some heavy burden having been dragged along it"! But would a *number* of men have put themselves to the superfluous trouble of taking down a fence, for the purpose of dragging through it a corpse which they might have *lifted over* any fence in an instant? Would a *number* of men have so *dragged* a corpse at all as to have left evident *traces* of the dragging?

'And here we must refer to an observation of "Le Commerciel"; an observation upon which I have already, in some measure, commented. "A piece", says this journal, "of one of the unfortunate girl's petticoats was torn out and tied under her chin, and around the back of her head, probably to prevent screams. This was done by fellows who had no pocket-handkerchiefs."

'I have before suggested that a genuine blackguard is never *without* a pocket-handkerchief. But it is not to this fact that I now especially advert. That it was not through want of a handkerchief for the purpose imagined by "Le Commerciel", that this bandage was employed, is rendered apparent by the handkerchief left in the thicket; and that the object was not "to prevent screams" appears, also, from the bandage having been employed in preference to what would so much better have answered the purpose. But the language of the evidence speaks of the strip in question as "found around the neck, fitting loosely, and secured with a hard knot". These words are sufficiently vague, but differ materially from those of "Le Commerciel". The slip was eighteen inches wide, and therefore, although of muslin, would form a strong band when folded or rumpled longitudinally. And thus rumpled it was discovered. My inference is this. The solitary murderer, having borne the corpse, for some distance (whether from the thicket or elsewhere), by means of the bandage *hitched* around its middle, found the weight, in this mode of procedure, too much for his strength. He resolved to drag the burthen—the evidence goes to show that it *was* dragged. With this object in view, it became neces-

sary to attach something like a rope to one of the extremities. It could be best attached about the neck, where the head would prevent its slipping off. And, now, the murderer bethought him, unquestionably, of the bandage about the loins. He would have used this, but for its volution about the corpse, the *hitch* which embarrassed it, and the reflection that it had not been "torn off" from the garment. It was easier to tear a new slip from the petticoat. He tore it, made it fast about the neck, and so *dragged* his victim to the brink of the river. That this "bandage", only attainable with trouble and delay, and but imperfectly answering its purpose— that this bandage was employed *at all*, demonstrates that the necessity for its employment sprang from circumstances arising at a period when the handkerchief was no longer attainable— that is to say, arising, as we have imagined, after quitting the thicket (if the thicket it was), and on the road between the thicket and the river.

'But the evidence, you will say, of Madame Deluc, (!) points especially to the presence of *a gang*, in the vicinity of the thicket, at or about the epoch of the murder. This I grant. I doubt if there were not a *dozen* gangs, such as described by Madame Deluc, in and about the vicinity of the Barrière du Roule at *or about* the period of this tragedy. But the gang which has drawn upon itself the pointed animadversion, although the somewhat tardy and very suspicious evidence of Madame Deluc, is the *only* gang which is represented by that honest and scrupulous old lady as having eaten her cakes and swallowed her brandy, without putting themselves to the trouble of making her payment. *Et hinc illae irae?*

'But what *is* the precise evidence of Madame Deluc? "A gang of miscreants made their appearance, behaved boisterously, ate and drank without making payment, followed in the route of the young man and girl, returned to the inn *about dusk*, and recrossed the river as if in great haste."

'Now this "great haste" very possibly seemed *greater* haste in the eyes of Madame Deluc, since she dwelt lingeringly and lamentingly upon her violated cakes and ale —cakes and ale for which she might still have entertained a faint hope of compensation. Why, otherwise, since it was *about dusk*, should she make a point of the *haste*? It is no cause for wonder, surely, that even a gang of blackguards should make *haste* to get home, when a wide river is to be crossed in small boats, when storm impends, and when night *approaches*.

'I say *approaches*; for the night had *not yet arrived*. It was only *about dusk* that the indecent haste of these "miscreants" offended the sober eyes of Madame Deluc. But we are told that it was upon this very evening that Madame Deluc, as well as her eldest son, "heard the screams of a female in the vicinity of the inn". And in what words does Madame Deluc designate the period of the evening at which these screams were heard? "It was *soon after dark*," she says. But "soon *after* dark", is, at least, *dark*; and "*about dusk*" is as certainly daylight. Thus it is abundantly clear that the gang quitted the Barrière du Roule *prior* to the screams overheard (?) by Madame Deluc. And although, in all the many reports of the evidence, the relative expressions in question are distinctly and invariably employed just as I have employed them in this

conversation with yourself, no notice whatever of the gross discrepancy has, as yet, been taken by any of the public journals, or by any of the myrmidons of police.

'I shall add but one to the arguments against a *gang*; but this *one* has, to my own understanding at least, a weight altogether irresistible. Under the circumstances of large reward offered, and full pardon to any King's evidence, it is not to be imagined, for a moment, that some member of *a gang* of low ruffians, or of any body of men, would not long ago have betrayed his accomplices. Each one of a gang so placed, is not so much greedy of reward, or anxious for escape, as *fearful of betrayal*. He betrays eagerly and early that *he may not himself be betrayed*. That the secret has not been divulged, is the very best of proof that it is, in fact, a secret. The horrors of this dark deed are known only to *one*, or two, living human beings, and to God.

'Let us sum up now the meagre yet certain fruits of our long analysis. We have attained the idea either of a fatal accident under the roof of Madame Deluc, or of a murder perpetrated, in the thicket at the Barrière du Roule, by a lover, or at least by an intimate and secret associate of the deceased. This associate is of swarthy complexion. This complexion, the "hitch" in the bandage, and the "sailor's knot", with which the bonnet-ribbon is tied, point to a seaman. His companionship with the deceased, a gay, but not an abject young girl, designates him as above the grade of the common sailor. Here the well-written and urgent communications to the journals are much in the way of corroboration. The circumstance of the first elope-

ment, as mentioned by "Le Mercurie", tends to blend the idea of this seaman with that of the "naval officer" who is first known to have led the unfortunate into crime.

"And here, most fitly, comes the consideration of the continued absence of him of the dark complexion. Let me pause to observe that the complexion of this man is dark and swarthy; it was no common swarthiness which constituted the *sole* point of remembrance, both as regards Valence and Madame Deluc. But why is this man absent? Was he murdered by the gang? If so, why are there only *traces* of the assassinated *girl*? The scene of the two outrages will naturally be supposed identical. And where is his corpse? The assassins would most probably have disposed of both in the same way. But it may be said that this man lives, and is deterred from making himself known, through dread of being charged with the murder. This consideration might be supposed to operate upon him now — at this late period — since it has been given in evidence that he was seen with Marie — but it would have had no force at the period of the deed. The first impulse of an innocent man would have been to announce the outrage, and to aid in identifying the ruffians. This, *policy* would have suggested. He had been seen with the girl. He had crossed the river with her in an open ferry-boat. The denouncing of the assassins would have appeared, even to an idiot, the surest and sole means of relieving himself from suspicion. We cannot suppose him, on the night of the fatal Sunday, both innocent himself and incognizant of an outrage committed. Yet only under such circumstances is it possible to imagine

that he would have failed, if alive, in the denouncement of the assassins.

'And what means are ours, of attaining the truth? We shall find these means multiplying and gathering distinctness as we proceed. Let us sift to the bottom this affair of the first elopement. Let us know the full history of "the officer", with his present circumstances, and his whereabouts at the precise period of the murder. Let us carefully compare with each other the various communications sent to the evening paper, in which the object was to inculpate *a gang*. This done, let us compare these communications, both as regards style and MS., with those sent to the morning paper, at a previous period, and insisting so vehemently upon the guilt of Mennais. And, all this done, let us again compare these various communications with the known MSS. of the officer. Let us endeavour to ascertain, by repeated questionings of Madame Deluc and her boys, as well as of the omnibus-driver, Valence, something more of the personal appearance and bearing of the "man of dark complexion". Queries, skilfully directed, will not fail to elicit, from some of these parties, information on this particular point (or upon others) -information which the parties themselves may not even be aware of possessing. And let us now trace *the boat* picked up by the bargeman on the morning of Monday the twenty-third of June, and which was removed from the barge-office, without the cognizance of the officer in attendance, and *without the rudder*, at some period prior to the discovery of the corpse. With a proper caution and perseverance we shall infallibly trace this boat; for not only can the barge-

man who picked it up identify it, but the *rudder is at hand*. The rudder *of a sail-boat* would not have been abandoned, without inquiry, by one altogether at ease in heart. And here let me pause to insinuate a question. There was no *advertisement* of the picking up of this boat. It was silently taken to the barge-office, and as silently removed. But its owner or employer—how *happened* he, at so early a period as Tuesday morning, to be informed, without the agency of advertisement, of the locality of the boat taken up on Monday, unless we imagine some connexion with the *navy*—some personal permanent connexion leading to cognizance of its minute interests—its petty local news?

'In speaking of the lonely assassin dragging his burden to the shore, I have already suggested the probability of his availing himself *of a boat*. Now we are to understand that Marie Rogêt *was* precipitated from a boat. This would naturally have been the case. The corpse could not have been trusted to the shallow waters of the shore. The peculiar marks on the back and shoulders of the victim tell of the bottom ribs of a boat. That the body was found without weight is also corroborative of the idea. If thrown from the shore a weight would have been attached. We can only account for its absence by supposing the murderer to have neglected the precaution of supplying himself with it before pushing off. In the act of consigning the corpse to the water, he would unquestionably have noticed his oversight; but then no remedy would have been at hand. Any risk would have been preferred to a return to that accursed shore. Having rid himself of his ghastly charge, the murderer would have

hastened to the city. There, at some obscure wharf, he would have leaped on land. But the boat—would he have secured it? He would have been in too great haste for such things as securing a boat. Moreover, in fastening it to the wharf, he would have felt as if securing evidence against himself. His natural thought would have been to cast from him, as far as possible, all that had held connexion with his crime. He would not only have fled from the wharf, but he would not have permitted *the boat* to remain. Assuredly he would have cast it adrift. Let us pursue our fancies.—In the morning, the wretch is stricken with unutterable horror at finding that the boat has been picked up and detained at a locality which he is in the daily habit of frequenting —at a locality, perhaps, which his duty compels him to frequent. The next night, *without daring to ask for the rudder*, he removes it. Now *where* is that rudderless boat? Let it be one of our first purposes to discover. With the first glimpse we obtain of it, the dawn of our success shall begin. This boat shall guide us, with a rapidity which will surprise even ourselves, to him who employed it in the midnight of the fatal Sabbath. Corroboration will rise upon corroboration, and the murderer will be traced.'

[For reasons which we shall not specify, but which to many readers will appear obvious, we have taken the liberty of here omitting, from the MSS. placed in our hands, such portion as details the *following up* of the apparently slight clue obtained by Dupin. We feel it advisable only to state, in brief, that the result desired was brought to pass: and that the Prefect fulfilled punctually, although

with reluctance, the terms of his compact with the Chevalier. Mr. Poe's article concludes with the following words.—*Eds.*[1]]

It will be understood that I speak of coincidences *and no more*. What I have said above upon this topic must suffice. In my own heart there dwells no faith in preter-nature. That Nature and its God are two, no man who thinks will deny. That the latter, creating the former, can, at will, control or modify it, is also unquestionable. I say 'at will'; for the question is of will, and not, as the insanity of logic has assumed, of power. It is not that the Deity *cannot* modify his laws, but that we insult him in imagining a possible necessity for modification. In their origin these laws were fashioned to embrace *all* contingencies which *could* lie in the Future. With God all is *Now*.

I repeat, then, that I speak of these things only as of coincidences. And farther: in what I relate it will be seen that between the fate of the unhappy Mary Cecilia Rogers, so far as that fate is known, and the fate of one Marie Rogêt up to a certain epoch in her history, there has existed a parallel in the contemplation of whose wonderful exactitude the reason becomes embarrassed. I say all this will be seen. But let it not for a moment be supposed that, in proceeding with the sad narrative of Marie from the epoch just mentioned, and in tracing to its *dénouement* the mystery which enshrouded her, it is my covert design to hint at an extension of the parallel, or even to suggest that the measures adopted in Paris for the discovery of the assassin

[1] Of the Magazine in which the article was originally published.

of a grisette, or measures founded in any similar ratiocination, would produce any similar result.

For, in respect to the latter branch of the supposition, it should be considered that the most trifling variation in the facts of the two cases might give rise to the most important miscalculations, by diverting thoroughly the two courses of events; very much as, in arithmetic, an error which, in its own individuality, may be inappreciable, produces, at length, by dint of multiplication at all points of the process, a result enormously at variance with truth. And, in regard to the former branch, we must not fail to hold in view that the very Calculus of Probabilities to which I have referred, forbids all idea of the extension of the parallel:—forbids it with a positiveness strong and decided just in proportion as this parallel has already been long-drawn and exact. This is one of those anomalous propositions which, seemingly appealing to thought altogether apart from the mathematical, is yet one which only the mathematician can fully entertain. Nothing, for example, is more difficult than to convince the merely general reader that the fact of sixes having been thrown twice in succession by a player at dice, is sufficient cause for betting the largest odds that sixes will not be thrown in the third attempt. A suggestion to this effect is usually rejected by the intellect at once. It does not appear that the two throws which have been completed, and which lie now absolutely in the Past, can have influence upon the throw which exists only in the Future. The chance for throwing sixes seems to be precisely as it was at any ordinary time—that is to say, subject only to the influence of the various

other throws which may be made by the dice. And this is a reflection which appears so exceedingly obvious that attempts to controvert it are received more frequently with a derisive smile than with anything like respectful attention. The error here involved—a gross error redolent of mischief—I cannot pretend to expose within the limits assigned me at present; and with the philosophical it needs no exposure. It may be sufficient here to say that it forms one of an infinite series of mistakes which arise in the path of Reason through her propensity for seeking the truth *in detail*.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE BRUCE-PARTINGTON PLANS

By Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

In the third week of November, in the year 1895, a dense yellow fog settled down upon London. From the Monday to the Thursday I doubt whether it was ever possible from our windows in Baker Street to see the loom of the opposite houses. The first day Holmes had spent in cross-indexing his huge book of references. The second and third had been patiently occupied upon a subject which he had recently made his hobby—the music of the Middle Ages. But when, for the fourth time, after pushing back our chairs from breakfast we saw the greasy, heavy brown swirl still drifting past us and condensing in oily drops upon the window-panes, my comrade's impatient and active nature could endure this drab existence no longer. He paced restlessly about our sitting-room in a fever of suppressed energy, biting his nails, tapping the furniture, and chafing against inaction.

'Nothing of interest in the paper, Watson?' he said.

I was aware that by anything of interest, Holmes meant anything of criminal interest. There was the news of a revolution, of a possible war, and of an impending change of Government; but these did not come within the horizon of my companion. I could see nothing recorded in the shape of crime which was not commonplace and futile. Holmes groaned and resumed his restless meanderings.

'The London criminal is certainly a dull fellow,' said he, in the querulous voice of the sportsman whose game has failed him. 'Look out of this window, Watson. See how the figures loom up, are dimly seen, and then blend once more into the cloud-bank. The thief or the murderer could roam London on such a day as the tiger does the jungle, unseen until he pounces, and then evident only to his victim.'

'There have,' said I, 'been numerous petty thefts.'

Holmes snorted his contempt.

'This great and sombre stage is set for something more worthy than that,' said he. 'It is fortunate for this community that I am not a criminal.'

'It is, indeed!' said I, heartily.

'Suppose that I were Brooks or Woodhouse, or any of the fifty men who have good reason for taking my life, how long could I survive against my own pursuit? A summons, a bogus appointment, and all would be over. It is well they don't have days of fog in the Latin countries—the countries of assassination. By Jove! here comes something at last to break our dead monotony.'

It was the maid with a telegram. Holmes tore it open and burst out laughing.

'Well, well! What next?' said he. 'Brother Mycroft is coming round.'

'Why not?' I asked.

'Why not? It is as if you met a tram-car coming down a country lane. Mycroft has his rails and he runs on them. His Pall Mall lodgings, the Diogenes Club, Whitehall—that is his cycle. Once, and only once, he has been here. What upheaval can possibly have derailed him?'

'Does he not explain?'

Holmes handed me his brother's telegram.

'Must see you over Cadogan West. Coming at once. MYCROFT.'

'Cadogan West? I have heard the name.'

'It recalls nothing to my mind. But that Mycroft should break out in this erratic fashion! A planet might as well leave its orbit. By the way, do you know what Mycroft is?'

I had some vague recollection of an explanation at the time of the Adventure of the Greek Interpreter.

'You told me that he had some small office under the British Government.'

Holmes chuckled.

'I did not know you quite so well in those days. One has to be discreet when one talks of high matters of state. You are right in thinking that he is under the British Government. You would also be right in a sense if you said that occasionally he *is* the British Government.'

'My dear Holmes!'

'I thought I might surprise you. Mycroft draws four hundred and fifty pounds a year, remains a subordinate, has no ambitions of any kind, will receive neither honour nor title, but remains the most indispensable man in the country.'

'But how?'

'Well, his position is unique. He has made it for himself. There has never been anything like it before, nor will be again. He has the tidiest and most orderly brain, with the greatest capacity for storing facts, of any man living. The same great powers which I have turned to the detection of

crime he has used for this particular business. The conclusions of every department are passed to him, and he is the central exchange, the clearing-house, which makes out the balance. All other men are specialists, but his specialism is omniscience. We will suppose that a Minister needs information as to a point which involves the Navy, India, Canada, and the bimetallic question; he could get his separate advices from various departments upon each, but only Mycroft can focus them all, and say off-hand how each factor would affect the other. They began by using him as a short-cut, a convenience; now he has made himself an essential. In that great brain of his everything is pigeon-holed, and can be handed out in an instant. Again and again his word has decided the national policy. He lives in it. He thinks of nothing else save when, as an intellectual exercise, he unbends if I call upon him and ask him to advise me on one of my little problems. But Jupiter is descending to-day. What on earth can it mean? Who is Cadogan West, and what is he to Mycroft?'

'I have it,' I cried, and plunged among the litter of papers upon the sofa. 'Yes, yes, here he is, sure enough! Cadogan West was the young man who was found dead on the Underground on Tuesday morning.'

Holmes sat up at attention, his pipe half-way to his lips.

'This must be serious, Watson. A death which has caused my brother to alter his habits can be no ordinary one. What in the world can he have to do with it? The case was featureless as I remember it! The young man had apparently fallen out of the train and killed himself. He had not been robbed,

and there was no particular reason to suspect violence. Is that not so?'

'There has been an inquest,' said I, 'and a good many fresh facts have come out. Looked at more closely, I should certainly say that it was a curious case.'

'Judging by its effect upon my brother, I should think it must be a most extraordinary one.' He snuggled down in his armchair. 'Now, Watson, let us have the facts.'

'The man's name was Arthur Cadogan West. He was twenty-seven years of age, unmarried, and a clerk at Woolwich Arsenal.'

'Government employ. Behold the link with brother Mycroft!'

'He left Woolwich suddenly on Monday night. Was last seen by his fiancée, Miss Violet Westbury, whom he left abruptly in the fog about 7.30 that evening. There was no quarrel between them and she can give no motive for his action. The next thing heard of him was when his dead body was discovered by a plate-layer named Mason, just outside Aldgate Station on the Underground system in London.'

'When?'

'The body was found at six on the Tuesday morning. It was lying wide of the metals upon the left hand of the track as one goes eastward, at a point close to the station, where the line emerges from the tunnel in which it runs. The head was badly crushed—an injury which might well have been caused by a fall from the train. The body could only have come on the line in that way. Had it been carried down from any neighbouring street,

it must have passed the station barriers, where a collector is always standing. This point seems absolutely certain.'

'Very good. The case is definite enough. The man, dead or alive, either fell or was precipitated from a train. So much is clear to me. Continue.'

'The trains which traverse the lines of rail beside which the body was found are those which run from west to east, some being purely Metropolitan, and some from Willesden and outlying junctions. It can be stated for certain that this young man, when he met his death, was travelling in this direction at some late hour of the night, but at what point he entered the train it is impossible to state.'

'His ticket, of course, would show that.'

'There was no ticket in his pockets.'

'No ticket! Dear me, Watson, this is really very singular. According to my experience it is not possible to reach the platform of a Metropolitan train without exhibiting one's ticket. Presumably, then, the young man had one. Was it taken from him in order to conceal the station from which he came? It is possible. Or did he drop it in the carriage? That also is possible. But the point is of curious interest. I understand that there was no sign of robbery?'

'Apparently not. There is a list here of his possessions. His purse contained two pounds fifteen. He had also a cheque book on the Woolwich branch of the Capital and Counties Bank. Through this his identity was established. There were also two dress-circle tickets for the Woolwich Theatre, dated for that very evening. Also a small packet of technical papers.'

Holmes gave an exclamation of satisfaction.

'There we have it at last, Watson! British Government — Woolwich Arsenal — Technical papers — Brother Mycroft, the chain is complete. But here he comes, if I am not mistaken, to speak for himself.'

A moment later the tall and portly form of Mycroft Holmes was ushered into the room. Heavily built and massive, there was a suggestion of uncouth physical inertia in the figure, but above this unwieldy frame there was perched a head so masterful in its brow, so alert in its steel-grey, deep-set eyes, so firm in its lips, and so subtle in its play of expression that, after the first glance one forgot the gross body and remembered only the dominant mind.

At his heels came our old friend Lestrade, of Scotland Yard — thin and austere. The gravity of both their faces foretold some weighty quest. The detective shook hands without a word. Mycroft Holmes struggled out of his overcoat and subsided into an armchair.

'A most annoying business, Sherlock,' said he. 'I extremely dislike altering my habits, but the powers that be would take no denial. In the present state of Siam it is most awkward that I should be away from the office. But it is a real crisis. I have never seen the Prime Minister so upset. As to the Admiralty — it is buzzing like an overturned bee-hive. Have you read up the case?'

'We have just done so. What were the technical papers?'

'Ah, there's the point! Fortunately, it has not come out. The Press would be furious if it did. The papers which this wretched youth had in

his pocket were the plans of the Bruce-Partington submarine.'

Mycroft Holmes spoke with a solemnity which showed his sense of the importance of the subject. His brother and I sat expectant.

'Surely you have heard of it? I thought every one had heard of it.'

'Only as a name.'

'Its importance can hardly be exaggerated. It has been the most jealously guarded of all Government secrets. You may take it from me that naval warfare becomes impossible within the radius of a Bruce-Partington's operation. Two years ago a very large sum was smuggled through the Estimates and was expended in acquiring a monopoly of the invention. Every effort has been made to keep the secret. The plans, which are exceedingly intricate, comprising some thirty separate patents, each essential to the working of the whole, are kept in an elaborate safe in a confidential office adjoining the Arsenal, with burglar-proof doors and windows. Under no conceivable circumstances were the plans to be taken from the office. If the Chief Constructor of the Navy desired to consult them, even he was forced to go to the Woolwich office for the purpose. And yet here we find them in the pockets of a dead junior clerk in the heart of London. From an official point of view it 's simply awful.'

'But you have recovered them?'

'No, Sherlock, no! That 's the pinch. We have not. Ten papers were taken from Woolwich. There were seven in the pockets of Cadogan West. The three most essential are gone—stolen, vanished. You must drop everything, Sherlock. Never mind

your usual petty puzzles of the police-court. It 's a vital international problem that you have to solve. Why did Cadogan West take the papers, where are the missing ones, how did he die, how came his body where it was found, how can the evil be set right? Find an answer to all these questions, and you will have done good service for your country.'

'Why do you not solve it yourself, Mycroft? You can see as far as I.'

'Possibly, Sherlock. But it is a question of getting details. Give me your details, and from an armchair I will return you an excellent expert opinion. But to run here and run there, to cross-question railway guards, and lie on my face with a lens to my eye—it is not my métier. No, you are the one man who can clear the matter up. If you have a fancy to see your name in the next honours list——'

My friend smiled and shook his head.

'I play the game for the game's own sake,' said he. 'But the problem certainly presents some points of interest, and I shall be very pleased to look into it. Some more facts, please.'

'I have jotted down the more essential ones upon this sheet of paper, together with a few addresses which you will find of service. The actual official guardian of the papers is the famous Government expert, Sir James Walter, whose decorations and sub-titles fill two lines of a book of reference. He has grown grey in the service, is a gentleman, a favoured guest in the most exalted houses, and above all a man whose patriotism is beyond suspicion. He is one of two who have a key of the safe. I may add that the papers were undoubtedly in the office during working hours on Monday, and that

Sir James left for London about three o'clock taking his key with him. He was at the house of Admiral Sinclair at Barclay Square during the whole of the evening when this incident occurred.'

'Has the fact been verified?'

'Yes; his brother, Colonel Valentine Walter, has testified to his departure from Woolwich, and Admiral Sinclair to his arrival in London; so Sir James is no longer a direct factor in the problem.'

'Who was the other man with a key?'

'The senior clerk and draughtsman, Mr. Sidney Johnson. He is a man of forty, married, with five children. He is a silent, morose man, but he has, on the whole, an excellent record in the public service. He is unpopular with his colleagues, but a hard worker. According to his own account, corroborated only by the word of his wife, he was at home the whole of Monday evening after office hours, and his key has never left the watch-chain upon which it hangs.'

'Tell us about Cadogan West.'

'He has been ten years in the Service, and has done good work. He has the reputation of being hot-headed and impetuous, but a straight, honest man. We have nothing against him. He was next Sidney Johnson in the office. His duties brought him into daily, personal contact with the plans. No one else had the handling of them.'

'Who locked the plans up that night?'

'Mr. Sidney Johnson, the senior clerk.'

'Well, it is surely perfectly clear who took them away. They are actually found upon the person of this junior clerk, Cadogan West. That seems final, does it not?'

'It does, Sherlock, and yet it leaves so much unexplained. In the first place, why did he take them?'

'I presume they were of value?'

'He could have got several thousands for them very easily.'

'Can you suggest any possible motive for taking the papers to London except to sell them?'

'No, I cannot.'

'Then we must take that as our working hypothesis. Young West took the papers. Now this could only be done by having a false key '

'Several false keys. He had to open the building and the room.'

'He had, then, several false keys. He took the papers to London to sell the secret, intending, no doubt, to have the plans themselves back in the safe next morning before they were missed. While in London on this treasonable mission he met his end.'

'How?'

'We will suppose that he was travelling back to Woolwich when he was killed and thrown out of the compartment.'

'Aldgate, where the body was found, is considerably past the station for London Bridge, which would be his route to Woolwich.'

'Many circumstances could be imagined under which he would pass London Bridge. There was some one in the carriage, for example, with whom he was having an absorbing interview. This interview led to a violent scene, in which he lost his life. Possibly he tried to leave the carriage, fell out on the line, and so met his end. The other closed the

door. There was a thick fog, and nothing could be seen.'

'No better explanation can be given with our present knowledge; and yet consider, Sherlock, how much you leave untouched. We will suppose, for argument's sake, that young Cadogan West *had* determined to convey these papers to London. He would naturally have made an appointment with the foreign agent and kept his evening clear. Instead of that he took two tickets for the theatre, escorted his fiancée half-way there, and then suddenly disappeared.'

'A blind,' said Lestrade, who had sat listening with some impatience to the conversation.

'A very singular one. That is objection No. 1. Objection No. 2: We will suppose that he reaches London and sees the foreign agent. He must bring back the papers before morning or the loss will be discovered. He took away ten. Only seven were in his pocket. What had become of the other three? He certainly would not leave them of his own free will. Then, again, where is the price of his treason? One would have expected to find a large sum of money in his pocket.'

'It seems to me perfectly clear,' said Lestrade. 'I have no doubt at all as to what occurred. He took the papers to sell them. He saw the agent. They could not agree as to price. He started home again, but the agent went with him. In the train the agent murdered him, took the more essential papers, and threw his body from the carriage. That would account for everything, would it not?'

'Why had he no ticket?'

'The ticket would have shown which station was

nearest the agent's house. Therefore he took it from the murdered man's pocket.'

'Good, Lestrade, very good,' said Holmes. 'Your theory holds together. But if this is true, then the case is at an end. On the one hand the traitor is dead. On the other the plans of the Bruce-Partington submarine are presumably already on the Continent. What is there for us to do?'

'To act, Sherlock—to act!' cried Mycroft, springing to his feet. 'All my instincts are against this explanation. Use your powers! Go to the scene of the crime! See the people concerned! Leave no stone unturned! In all your career you have never had so great a chance of serving your country.'

'Well, well!' said Holmes, shrugging his shoulders. 'Come, Watson! And you, Lestrade, could you favour us with your company for an hour or two? We will begin our investigation by a visit to Aldgate Station. Good-bye, Mycroft. I shall let you have a report before evening, but I warn you in advance that you have little to expect.'

An hour later, Holmes, Lestrade, and I, stood upon the underground railroad at the point where it emerges from the tunnel immediately before Aldgate Station. A courteous red-faced old gentleman represented the railway company.

'This is where the young man's body lay,' said he, indicating a spot about three feet from the metals. 'It could not have fallen from above, for these, as you see, are all blank walls. Therefore, it could only have come from a train, and that train, so far as we can trace it, must have passed about midnight on Monday.'

'Have the carriages been examined for any sign of violence?'

'There are no such signs, and no ticket has been found.'

'No record of a door being found open?'

'None.'

'We have had some fresh evidence this morning,' said Lestrade. 'A passenger who passed Aldgate in an ordinary Metropolitan train about 11.40 on Monday night declares that he heard a heavy thud, as of a body striking the line, just before the train reached the station. There was dense fog, however, and nothing could be seen. He made no report of it at the time. Why, whatever is the matter with Mr. Holmes?'

My friend was standing with an expression of strained intensity upon his face, staring at the railway metals where they curved out of the tunnel. Aldgate is a junction, and there was a network of points. On these his eager, questioning eyes were fixed, and I saw on his keen, alert face that tightening of the lips, that quiver of the nostrils, and concentration of the heavy tufted brows which I knew so well.

'Points,' he muttered; 'the points.'

'What of it? What do you mean?'

'I suppose there are no great number of points on a system such as this?'

'No; there are very few.'

'And a curve, too. Points, and a curve. By Jove! if it were only so.'

'What is it, Mr. Holmes? Have you a clue?'

'An idea—an indication, no more. But the case certainly grows in interest. Unique, perfectly unique,

and yet why not? I do not see any indications of bleeding on the line.'

'There were hardly any.'

'But I understand that there was a considerable wound.'

'The bone was crushed, but there was no great external injury.'

'And yet one would have expected some bleeding. Would it be possible for me to inspect the train which contained the passenger who heard the thud of a fall in the fog?'

'I fear not, Mr. Holmes. The train has been broken up before now, and the carriages redistributed.'

'I can assure you, Mr. Holmes,' said Lestrade, 'that every carriage has been carefully examined. I saw to it myself.'

It was one of my friend's most obvious weaknesses that he was impatient with less alert intelligences than his own.

'Very likely,' said he, turning away. 'As it happens, it was not the carriages which I desired to examine. Watson, we have done all we can here. We need not trouble you any further, Mr. Lestrade. I think our investigations must now carry us to Woolwich.'

At London Bridge, Holmes wrote a telegram to his brother, which he handed to me before dispatching it. It ran thus:

'See some light in the darkness, but it may possibly flicker out. Meanwhile, please send by messenger, to await return at Baker Street, a complete list of all foreign spies or international agents known to be in England, with full address.—SHERLOCK.'

'That should be helpful, Watson,' he remarked, as we took our seats in the Woolwich train. 'We certainly owe brother Mycroft a debt for having introduced us to what promises to be a really very remarkable case.'

His eager face still wore that expression of intense and high-strung energy, which showed me that some novel and suggestive circumstance had opened up a stimulating line of thought. See the foxhound with hanging ears and drooping tail as it lolls about the kennels, and compare it with the same hound as, with gleaming eyes and straining muscles, it runs upon a breast-high scent—such was the change in Holmes since the morning. He was a different man to the limp and lounging figure in the mouse-coloured dressing-gown who had prowled so restlessly only a few hours before round the fog-girt room.

'There is material here. There is scope,' said he. 'I am dull indeed not to have understood its possibilities.'

'Even now they are dark to me.'

'The end is dark to me also, but I have hold of one idea which may lead us far. The man met his death elsewhere, and his body was on the *roof* of a carriage.'

'On the roof!'

'Remarkable, is it not? But consider the facts. Is it a coincidence that it is found at the very point where the train pitches and sways as it comes round on the points? Is not that the place where an object upon the roof might be expected to fall off? The points would affect no object inside the train. Either the body fell from the roof, or a very curious

coincidence has occurred. But now consider the question of the blood. Of course, there was no bleeding on the line if the body had bled elsewhere. Each fact is suggestive in itself. Together they have a cumulative force.'

'And the ticket, too!' I cried.

'Exactly. We could not explain the absence of a ticket. This would explain it. Everything fits together.'

'But suppose it were so, we are still as far as ever from unravelling the mystery of his death. Indeed, it becomes not simpler, but stranger.'

'Perhaps,' said Holmes, thoughtfully; 'perhaps.' He relapsed into a silent reverie, which lasted until the slow train drew up at last in Woolwich Station. There he called a cab and drew Mycroft's paper from his pocket.

'We have quite a little round of afternoon calls to make,' said he. 'I think that Sir James Walter claims our first attention.'

The house of the famous official was a fine villa with green lawns stretching down to the Thames. As we reached it the fog was lifting, and a thin, watery sunshine was breaking through. A butler answered our ring.

'Sir James, sir!' said he, with solemn face. 'Sir James died this morning.'

'Good heavens!' cried Holmes, in amazement. 'How did he die?'

'Perhaps you would care to step in, sir, and see his brother, Colonel Valentine?'

'Yes, we had best do so.'

We were ushered into a dim-lit drawing-room, where an instant later we were joined by a very tall,

handsome, light-bearded man of fifty, the younger brother of the dead scientist. His wild eyes, stained cheeks, and unkempt hair all spoke of the sudden blow which had fallen upon the household. He was hardly articulate as he spoke of it.

'It was this horrible scandal,' said he. 'My brother, Sir James, was a man of very sensitive honour, and he could not survive such an affair. It broke his heart. He was always so proud of the efficiency of his department, and this was a crushing blow.'

'We had hoped that he might have given us some indications which would have helped us to clear the matter up.'

'I assure you that it was all a mystery to him as it is to you and to all of us. He had already put all his knowledge at the disposal of the police. Naturally, he had no doubt that Cadogan West was guilty. But all the rest was inconceivable.'

'You cannot throw any new light upon the affair?'

'I know nothing myself save what I have read or heard. I have no desire to be discourteous, but can you understand, Mr Holmes, that we are much disturbed at present, and I must ask you to hasten this interview to an end.'

'This is indeed an unexpected development,' said my friend when we had regained the cab. 'I wonder if the death was natural, or whether the poor old fellow killed himself! If the latter, may it be taken as some sign of self reproach for duty neglected? We must leave that question to the future. Now we shall turn to the Cadogan Wests.'

A small but well kept house in the outskirts of

the town sheltered the bereaved mother. The old lady was too dazed with grief to be of any use to us, but at her side was a white faced young lady, who introduced herself as Miss Violet Westbury, the fiancée of the dead man, and the last to see him upon that fatal night.

'I cannot explain it, Mr. Holmes,' she said. 'I have not shut an eye since the tragedy, thinking, thinking, thinking, night and day, what the true meaning of it can be. Arthur was the most single minded, chivalrous, patriotic man upon earth. He would have cut his right hand off before he would sell a State secret confided to his keeping. It is absurd, impossible, preposterous to any one who knew him.'

'But the facts, Miss Westbury?'

'Yes, yes, I admit I cannot explain them.'

'Was he in any want of money?'

'No; his needs were very simple and his salary ample. He had saved a few hundreds, and we were to marry at the New Year.'

'No signs of any mental excitement? Come, Miss Westbury, be absolutely frank with us.'

The quick eye of my companion had noted some change in her manner. She coloured and hesitated.

'Yes,' she said, at last. 'I had a feeling that there was something on his mind.'

'For long?'

'Only for the last week or so. He was thoughtful and worried. Once I pressed him about it. He admitted that there was something, and that it was concerned with his official life. "It is too serious for me to speak about, even to you," said he. I could get nothing more.'

Holmes looked grave.

'Go on, Miss Westbury. Even if it seems to tell against him, go on. We cannot say what it may lead to.'

'Indeed I have nothing more to tell. Once or twice it seemed to me that he was on the point of telling me something. He spoke one evening of the importance of the secret, and I have some recollection that he said that no doubt foreign spies would pay a great deal to have it.'

My friend's face grew graver still.

'Anything else?'

'He said that we were slack about such matters—that it would be easy for a traitor to get the plans.'

'Was it only recently that he made such remarks?'

'Yes, quite recently.'

'Now tell us of that last evening.'

'We were to go to the theatre. The fog was so thick that a cab was useless. We walked, and our way took us close to the office. Suddenly he darted away into the fog.'

'Without a word?'

'He gave an exclamation; that was all. I waited but he never returned. Then I walked home. Next morning, after the office opened, they came to inquire. About twelve o'clock we heard the terrible news. Oh, Mr. Holmes, if you could only, only save his honour! It was so much to him.'

Holmes shook his head sadly.

'Come, Watson,' said he, 'our ways lie elsewhere. Our next station must be the office from which the papers were taken.

'It was black enough before against this young

man, but our inquiries make it blacker,' he remarked, as the cab lumbered off. 'His coming marriage gives a motive for the crime. He naturally wanted money. The idea was in his head, since he spoke about it. He nearly made the girl an accomplice in the treason by telling her his plans. It is all very bad.'

'But surely, Holmes, character goes for something? Then, again, why should he leave the girl in the street and dart away to commit a felony?'

'Exactly! There are certainly objections. But it is a formidable case which they have to meet.'

Mr. Sidney Johnson, the senior clerk, met us at the office, and received us with that respect which my companion's card always commanded. He was a thin, gruff, bespectacled man of middle age, his cheeks haggard, and his hands twitching from the nervous strain to which he had been subjected.

'It is bad, Mr. Holmes, very bad! Have you heard of the death of the chief?'

'We have just come from his house.'

'The place is disorganized. The chief dead, Cadogan West dead, our papers stolen. And yet, when we closed our door on Monday evening we were as efficient an office as any in the Government service. Good God, it 's dreadful to think of! That West, of all men, should have done such a thing!'

'You are sure of his guilt, then?'

'I can see no other way out of it. And yet I would have trusted him as I trust myself.'

'At what hour was the office closed on Monday?'

'At five.'

'Did you close it?'

'I am always the last man out.'

'Where were the plans?'

'In that safe. I put them there myself.'

'Is there no watchman to the building?'

'There is; but he has other departments to look after as well. He is an old soldier and a most trustworthy man. He saw nothing that evening. Of course, the fog was very thick.'

'Suppose that Cadogan West wished to make his way into the building after hours; he would need three keys, would he not, before he could reach the papers?'

'Yes, he would. The key of the outer door, the key of the office, and the key of the safe.'

'Only Sir James Walter and you had those keys?'

'I had no keys of the doors—only of the safe.'

'Was Sir James a man who was orderly in his habits?'

'Yes, I think he was. I know that so far as those three keys are concerned he kept them on the same ring. I have often seen them there.'

'And that ring went with him to London?'

'He said so.'

'And your key never left your possession?'

'Never.'

'Then West, if he is the culprit, must have had a duplicate. And yet none was found upon his body. One other point: if a clerk in this office desired to sell the plans, would it not be simpler to copy the plans for himself than to take the originals, as was actually done?'

'It would take considerable technical knowledge to copy the plans in an effective way.'

'But I suppose either Sir James, or you, or West had that technical knowledge?'

'No doubt we had, but I beg you won't try to drag me into the matter, Mr. Holmes. What is the use of our speculating in this way when the original plans were actually found on West?'

'Well, it is certainly singular that he should run the risk of taking originals if he could safely have taken copies, which would have equally served his turn.'

'Singular, no doubt—and yet he did so.'

'Every inquiry in this case reveals something inexplicable. Now there are three papers still missing. They are, as I understand, the vital ones.'

'Yes, that is so.'

'Do you mean to say that any one holding these three papers, and without the seven others, could construct a Bruce-Partington submarine?'

'I reported to that effect to the Admiralty. But to-day I have been over the drawings again, and I am not so sure of it. The double valves with the automatic self-adjusting slots are drawn in one of the papers which have been returned. Until the foreigners had invented that for themselves they could not make the boat. Of course, they might soon get over the difficulty.'

'But the three missing drawings are the most important?'

'Undoubtedly.'

'I think, with your permission, I will now take a stroll round the premises. I do not recall any other question which I desired to ask.'

He examined the lock of the safe, the door of the room, and finally the iron shutters of the window. It was only when we were on the lawn outside that his interest was strongly excited. There was a

laurel bush outside the window, and several of the branches bore signs of having been twisted or snapped. He examined them carefully with his lens, and then some dim and vague marks upon the earth beneath. Finally he asked the chief clerk to close the iron shutters, and he pointed out to me that they hardly met in the centre, and that it would be possible for any one outside to see what was going on within the room.

'The indications are ruined by the three days' delay. They may mean something or nothing. Well, Watson, I do not think that Woolwich can help us further. It is a small crop which we have gathered. Let us see if we can do better in London.'

Yet we added one more sheaf to our harvest before we left Woolwich Station. The clerk in the ticket office was able to say with confidence that he saw Cadogan West — whom he knew well by sight — upon the Monday night, and that he went to London by the 8.15 to London Bridge. He was alone, and took a single third-class ticket. The clerk was struck at the time by his excited and nervous manner. So shaky was he that he could hardly pick up his change, and the clerk had helped him with it. A reference to the time-table showed that the 8.15 was the first train which it was possible for West to take after he had left the lady about 7.30.

'Let us reconstruct, Watson,' said Holmes, after half an hour of silence. 'I am not aware that in all our joint researches we have ever had a case which was more difficult to get at. Every fresh advance which we make only reveals a fresh ridge beyond. And yet we have surely made some appreciable progress.

'The effect of our inquiries at Woolwich has in the main been against young Cadogan West; but the indications at the window would lend themselves to a more favourable hypothesis. Let us suppose, for example, that he had been approached by some foreign agent. It might have been done under such pledges as would have prevented him from speaking of it, and yet would have affected his thoughts in the direction indicated by his remarks to his fiancée. Very good. We will now suppose that as he went to the theatre with the young lady he suddenly, in the fog, caught a glimpse of this same agent going in the direction of the office. He was an impetuous man, quick in his decisions. Everything gave way to his duty. He followed the man, reached the window, saw the abstraction of the documents, and pursued the thief. In this way we get over the objection that no one would take originals when he could make copies. This outsider had to take originals. So far it holds together.'

'What is the next step?'

'Then we come into difficulties. One would imagine that under such circumstances the first act of young Cadogan West would be to seize the villain and raise the alarm. Why did he not do so? Could it have been an official superior who took the papers? That would explain West's conduct. Or could the chief have given West the slip in the fog, and West started at once to London to head him off from his own rooms, presuming that he knew where the rooms were? The call must have been very pressing, since he left his girl standing in the fog, and made no effort to communicate with her. Our scent runs cold here, and there is a vast gap

between either hypothesis and the laying of West's body, with seven papers in his pocket, on the roof of a Metropolitan train. My instinct now is to work from the other end. If Mycroft has given us the list of addresses we may be able to pick our man, and follow two tracks instead of one.'

Surely enough, a note awaited us at Baker Street. A Government messenger had brought it post-haste. Holmes glanced at it and threw it over to me.

'There are numerous small fry, but few who would handle so big an affair. The only men worth considering are Adolph Meyer, of 13, Great George Street, Westminster: Louis La Rothière, of Campden Mansions, Notting Hill; and Hugo Oberstein, 13, Caulfield Gardens, Kensington. The latter was known to be in town on Monday, and is now reported as having left. Glad to hear you have seen some light. The Cabinet awaits your final report with the utmost anxiety. Urgent representations have arrived from the very highest quarter. The whole force of the State is at your back if you should need it. Mycroft.'

'I'm afraid,' said Holmes, smiling, 'that all the Queen's horses and all the Queen's men cannot avail in this matter.' He had spread out his big map of London, and leaned eagerly over it. 'Well, well,' said he presently, with an exclamation of satisfaction, 'things are turning a little in our direction at last. Why, Watson, I do honestly believe that we are going to pull it off after all.' He slapped me on the shoulder with a sudden burst of hilarity. 'I am going out now. It is only a reconnaissance. I

will do nothing serious without my trusted comrade and biographer at my elbow. Do you stay here, and the odds are that you will see me again in an hour or two. If time hangs heavy get foolscap and a pen, and begin your narrative of how we saved the State.'

I felt some reflection of his elation in my own mind, for I knew well that he would not depart so far from his usual austerity of demeanour unless there was good cause for exultation. All the long November evening I waited, filled with impatience for his return. At last, shortly after nine o'clock there arrived a messenger with a note:

'Am dining at Goldini's Restaurant, Gloucester Road, Kensington. Please come at once and join me there. Bring with you a jemmy, a dark lantern, a chisel, and a revolver. — S. H.'

It was a nice equipment for a respectable citizen to carry through the dim, fog-draped streets. I stowed them all discreetly away in my overcoat, and drove straight to the address given. There sat my friend at a little round table near the door of the garish Italian restaurant.

'Have you had something to eat? Then join me in a coffee and curaçao. Try one of the proprietor's cigars. They are less poisonous than one would expect. Have you the tools?'

'They are here, in my overcoat.'

'Excellent. Let me give you a short sketch of what I have done, with some indication of what we are about to do. Now it must be evident to you, Watson, that this young man's body was *placed* on the roof of the train. That was clear from the instant that I determined the fact that it was

from the roof, and not from a carriage, that he had fallen.

'Could it not have been dropped from a bridge?'

'I should say it was impossible. If you examine the roofs you will find that they are slightly rounded, and there is no railing round them. Therefore, we can say for certain that young Cadogan West was placed on it.'

'How could he be placed there?'

'That was the question which we had to answer. There is only one possible way. You are aware that the underground runs clear of tunnels at some points in the West-end. I had a vague memory that as I have travelled by it I have occasionally seen windows just above my head. Now, suppose that a train halted under such a window, would there be any difficulty in laying a body upon the roof?'

'It seems most improbable.'

'We must fall back upon the old axiom that when all other contingencies fail, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth. Here all other contingencies *have* failed. When I found that the leading international agent, who had just left London, lived in a row of houses which abutted upon the Underground, I was so pleased that you were a little astonished at my sudden frivolity.'

'Oh, that was it, was it?'

'Yes, that was it. Mr. Hugo Oberstein, of 13, Caulfield Gardens, had become my objective. I began my operations at Gloucester Road Station, where a very helpful official walked with me along the track, and allowed me to satisfy myself, not only that the back-stair windows of Caulfield Gardens open on the line, but the even more essential

fact that, owing to the intersection of one of the larger railways, the Underground trains are frequently held motionless for some minutes at that very spot.'

'Splendid, Holmes! You have got it!'

'So far—so far, Watson. We advance, but the goal is afar. Well, having seen the back of Caulfield Gardens, I visited the front and satisfied myself that the bird was indeed flown. It is a considerable house, unfurnished, so far as I could judge, in the upper rooms. Oberstein lived there with a single valet, who was probably a confederate entirely in his confidence. We must bear in mind that Oberstein has gone to the Continent to dispose of his booty, but not with any idea of flight; for he had no reason to fear a warrant, and the idea of an amateur domiciliary visit would certainly never occur to him. Yet that is precisely what we are about to make.'

'Could we not get a warrant and legalize it?'

'Hardly on the evidence.'

'What can we hope to do?'

'We cannot tell what correspondence may be there.'

'I don't like it, Holmes.'

'My dear fellow, you shall keep watch in the street. I'll do the criminal part. It 's not a time to stick at trifles. Think of Mycroft's note, of the Admiralty, the Cabinet, the exalted person who waits for news. We are bound to go.'

My answer was to rise from the table.

'You are right, Holmes. We are bound to go.'

He sprang up and shook me by the hand.

'I knew you would not shrink at the last,' said

he, and for a moment I saw something in his eyes which was nearer to tenderness than I had ever seen. The next instant he was his masterful, practical self once more.

'It is nearly half a mile, but there is no hurry. Let us walk,' said he. 'Don't drop the instruments, I beg. Your arrest as a suspicious character would be a most unfortunate complication.'

Caulfield Gardens was one of those lines of flat-faced, pillared, and porticoed houses which are so prominent a product of the middle Victorian epoch in the West-end of London. Next door there appeared to be a children's party, for the merry buzz of young voices and the clatter of a piano resounded through the night. The fog still hung about and screened us with its friendly shade. Holmes had lit his lantern and flashed it upon the massive door.

'This is a serious proposition,' said he. 'It is certainly bolted as well as locked. We would do better in the area. There is an excellent archway down yonder in case a too zealous policeman should intrude. Give me a hand, Watson, and I'll do the same for you.'

A minute later we were both in the area. Hardly had we reached the dark shadows before the step of the policeman was heard in the fog above. As its soft rhythm died away, Holmes set to work upon the lower door. I saw him stoop and strain until with a sharp crash it flew open. We sprang through into the dark passage, closing the area door behind us. Holmes led the way up the curving, uncarpeted stair. His little fan of yellow light shone upon a low window.

'Here we are, Watson—this must be the one.'

He threw it open, and as he did so there was a low, harsh murmur, growing steadily into a loud roar as a train dashed past us in the darkness. Holmes swept his light along the window-sill. It was thickly coated with soot from the passing engines, but the black surface was blurred and rubbed in places.

'You can see where they rested the body. Halloa, Watson! what is this? There can be no doubt that it is a blood mark.' He was pointing to faint discolorations along the woodwork of the window. 'Here it is on the stone of the stair also. The demonstration is complete. Let us stay here until a train stops.'

We had not long to wait. The very next train roared from the tunnel as before, but slowed in the open, and then, with a creaking of brakes, pulled up immediately beneath us. It was not four feet from the window-ledge to the roof of the carriages. Holmes softly closed the window.

'So far we are justified,' said he. 'What do you think of it, Watson?'

'A masterpiece. You have never risen to a greater height.'

'I cannot agree with you there. From the moment that I conceived the idea of the body being upon the roof, which surely was not a very abstruse one, all the rest was inevitable. If it were not for the grave interests involved the affair up to this point would be insignificant. Our difficulties are still before us. But perhaps we may find something here which may help us.'

We had ascended the kitchen stair and entered the suite of rooms upon the first floor. One was a dining-room, severely furnished and containing

nothing of interest. A second was a bedroom, which also drew blank. The remaining room appeared more promising, and my companion settled down to a systematic examination. It was littered with books and papers, and was evidently used as a study. Swiftly and methodically Holmes turned over the contents of drawer after drawer and cupboard after cupboard, but no gleam of success came to brighten his austere face. At the end of an hour he was no further than when he started.

'The cunning dog has covered his tracks,' said he. 'He has left nothing to incriminate him. His dangerous correspondence has been destroyed or removed. This is our last chance.'

It was a small tin cash-box which stood upon the writing desk. Holmes prised it open with his chisel. Several rolls of paper were within, covered with figures and calculations, without any note to show to what they referred. The recurring words, 'Water pressure' and 'Pressure to the square inch' suggested some possible relation to a submarine. Holmes tossed them all impatiently aside. There only remained an envelope with some small newspaper slips inside it. He shook them out on the table, and at once I saw by his eager face that his hopes had been raised.

'What's this, Watson? Eh? What's this? Record of a series of messages in the advertisements of a paper. *Daily Telegraph* agony column by the print and paper. Right hand top corner of a page. No dates but messages arrange themselves. This must be the first:

"Hoped to hear sooner. Terms agreed to. Write fully to address given on card. —Pierrot."

'Next comes: "Too complex for description. Must have full report. Stuff awaits you when goods delivered.—Pierrot."

'Then comes "Matter presses. Must withdraw offer unless contract completed. Make appointment by letter. Will confirm by advertisement.—Pierrot."

'Finally: "Monday night after nine. Two taps. Only ourselves. Do not be so suspicious. Payment in hard cash when goods delivered.—Pierrot."

'A fairly complete record, Watson! If we could only get at the man at the other end!' He sat lost in thought, tapping his fingers on the table. Finally he sprang to his feet.

'Well, perhaps it won't be so difficult after all. There is nothing more to be done here, Watson. I think we might drive round to the offices of the *Daily Telegraph*, and so bring a good day's work to a conclusion.'

Mycroft Holmes and Lestrade had come round by appointment after breakfast next day and Sherlock Holmes had recounted to them our proceedings of the day before. The professional shook his head over our confessed burglary.

'We can't do these things in the force, Mr. Holmes,' said he. 'No wonder you get results that are beyond us. But some of these days you'll go too far, and you'll find yourself and your friend in trouble.'

'For England, home, and beauty—eh, Watson? Martyrs on the altar of our country. But what do you think of it, Mycroft?'

'Excellent, Sherlock! Admirable! But what use will you make of it?'

Holmes picked up the *Daily Telegraph* which lay upon the table.

'Have you seen Pierrot's advertisement to-day?'

'What! Another one?'

'Yes, here it is: "To-night. Same hour. Same place. Two taps. Most vitally important. Your own safety at stake. - Pierrot."'

'By George!' cried Lestrade. 'If he answers that we've got him!'

'That was my idea when I put it in. I think if you could both make it convenient to come with us about eight o'clock to Caulfield Gardens we might possibly get a little nearer to a solution.'

One of the most remarkable characteristics of Sherlock Holmes was his power of throwing his brain out of action and switching all his thoughts on to lighter things whenever he had convinced himself that he could no longer work to advantage. I remember that during the whole of that memorable day he lost himself in a monograph which he had undertaken upon the Polyphonic Motets of Lassus. For my own part I had none of this power of detachment, and the day, in consequence, appeared to be interminable. The great national importance of the issue, the suspense in high quarters, the direct nature of the experiment which we were trying—all combined to work upon my nerve. It was a relief to me when at last, after a light dinner, we set out upon our expedition. Lestrade and Mycroft met us by appointment at the outside of Gloucester Road Station. The area door of Oberstein's house had been left open the night before, and it was necessary for me, as Mycroft Holmes

absolutely and indignantly declined to climb the railings, to pass in and open the hall door. By nine o'clock we were all seated in the study, waiting patiently for our man.

An hour passed and yet another. When eleven struck, the measured beat of the great church clock seemed to sound the dirge of our hopes. Lestrade and Mycroft were fidgeting in their seats and looking twice a minute at their watches. Holmes sat silent and composed, his eyelids half shut, but every sense on the alert. He raised his head with a sudden jerk.

'He is coming,' said he.

There had been a furtive step past the door. Now it returned. We heard a shuffling sound outside, and then two sharp taps with the knocker. Holmes rose, motioning to us to remain seated. The gas in the hall was a mere point of light. He opened the outer door, and then as a dark figure slipped past him he closed and fastened it. 'This way!' we heard him say, and a moment later our man stood before us. Holmes had followed him closely, and as the man turned with a cry of surprise and alarm he caught him by the collar and threw him back into the room. Before our prisoner had recovered his balance the door was shut and Holmes standing with his back against it. The man glared round him, staggered, and fell senseless upon the floor. With the shock, his broad-brimmed hat flew from his head, his cravat slipped down from his lips, and there was the long light beard and the soft, handsome delicate features of Colonel Valentine Walter.

Holmes gave a whistle of surprise.

'You can write me down an ass this time, Watson,' said he. 'This was not the bird that I was looking for.'

'Who is he?' asked Mycroft eagerly.

'The younger brother of the late Sir James Walter, the head of the Submarine Department. Yes, yes; I see the fall of the cards. He is coming to. I think that you had best leave his examination to me.'

We had carried the prostrate body to the sofa. Now our prisoner sat up, looked round him with a horror-stricken face, and passed his hand over his forehead, like one who cannot believe his own senses.

'What is this?' he asked. 'I came here to visit Mr. Oberstein.'

'Everything is known, Colonel Walter,' said Holmes. 'How an English gentleman could behave in such a manner is beyond my comprehension. But your whole correspondence and relations with Oberstein are within our knowledge. So also are the circumstances connected with the death of young Cadogan West. Let me advise you to gain at least the small credit for repentance and confession, since there are still some details which we can only learn from your lips.'

The man groaned and sank his face in his hands. We waited, but he was silent.

'I can assure you,' said Holmes, 'that every essential is already known. We know that you were pressed for money; that you took an impress of the keys which your brother held; and that you entered into a correspondence with Oberstein, who answered your letters through the advertisement columns of the *Daily Telegraph*. We are aware that you went

down to the office in the fog on Monday night, but that you were seen and followed by young Cadogan West, who had probably some previous reason to suspect you. He saw your theft, but could not give the alarm, as it was just possible that you were taking the papers to your brother in London. Leaving all his private concerns, like the good citizen that he was, he followed you closely in the fog, and kept at your heels until you reached this very house. There he intervened, and then it was, Colonel Walter, that to treason you added the more terrible crime of murder.'

'I did not! I did not! Before God I swear that I did not!' cried our wretched prisoner.

'Tell us then, how Cadogan West met his end before you laid him upon the roof of a railway carriage.'

'I will. I swear to you that I will. I did the rest. I confess it. It was just as you say. A stock Exchange debt had to be paid. I needed the money badly. Oberstein offered me five thousand. It was to save myself from ruin. But as to murder, I am as innocent as you.'

'What happened then?'

'He had his suspicions before, and he followed me as you describe. I never knew it until I was at the very door. It was thick fog, and one could not see three yards. I had given two taps and Oberstein had come to the door. The young man rushed up and demanded to know what we were about to do with the papers. Oberstein had a short life-preserver. He always carried it with him. As West forced his way after us into the house Oberstein struck him on the head. The blow was a fatal one. He was dead within five minutes. There he lay in the hall,

and we were at our wits' end what to do. Then Oberstein had this idea about the trains which halted under his back window. But first he examined the papers which I had brought. He said that three of them were essential, and that he must keep them. 'You cannot keep them,' said I. 'There will be a dreadful row at Woolwich if they are not returned.' 'I must keep them,' said he, 'for they are so technical that it is impossible in the time to make copies.' 'Then they must all go back together to-night,' said I. He thought for a little, and then he cried out that he had it. 'Three I will keep,' said he. 'The others we will stuff into the pocket of this young man. When he is found the whole business will assuredly be put to his account.' I could see no other way out of it, so we did as he suggested. We waited half an hour at the window before a train stopped. It was so thick that nothing could be seen, and we had no difficulty in lowering West's body on to the train. That was the end of the matter so far as I was concerned.'

'And your brother?'

'He said nothing, but he had caught me once with his keys, and I think that he suspected. I read in his eyes that he suspected. As you know, he never held up his head again.'

There was silence in the room. It was broken by Mycroft Holmes.

'Can you not make reparation? It would ease your conscience, and possibly your punishment.'

'What reparation can I make?'

'Where is Oberstein with the papers?'

'I do not know.'

'Did he give you no address?'

'He said that letters to the Hôtel du Louvre, Paris, would eventually reach him.'

'Then reparation is still within your power,' said Sherlock Holmes.

'I will do anything I can. I owe this fellow no particular good-will. He has been my ruin and my downfall.'

'Here are paper and pen. Sit at this desk and write to my dictation. Direct the envelope to the address given. That is right. Now the letter: "Dear Sir, With regard to our transaction, you will no doubt have observed by now that one essential detail is missing. I have a tracing which will make it complete. This has involved me in extra trouble, however, and I must ask you for a further advance of five hundred pounds. I will not trust it to the post, nor will I take anything but gold or notes. I would come to you abroad, but it would excite remark if I left the country at present. Therefore I shall expect to meet you in the smoking-room of the Charing Cross Hotel at noon on Saturday. Remember that only English notes, or gold, will be taken." That will do very well. I shall be very much surprised if it does not fetch our man.'

And it did! It is a matter of history—that secret history of a nation which is often so much more intimate and interesting than its public chronicles—that Oberstein, eager to complete the coup of his lifetime, came to the lure and was safely engulfed for fifteen years in a British prison. In his trunk were found the invaluable Bruce-Partington plans, which he had put up for auction in all the naval centres of Europe.

Colonel Walter died in prison towards the end of the second year of his sentence. As to Holmes, he returned refreshed to his monograph upon the Polyphonic Motets of Lassus, which has since been printed for private circulation, and is said by experts to be the last word upon the subject. Some weeks afterwards I learned incidentally that my friend spent a day at Windsor, whence he returned with a remarkably fine emerald tie-pin. When I asked him if he had bought it, he answered that it was a present from a certain gracious lady in whose interests he had once been fortunate enough to carry out a small commission. He said no more; but I fancy that I could guess at that lady's august name, and I have little doubt that the emerald pin will for ever recall to my friend's memory the adventure of the Bruce-Partington plans.

PRINCE CHARLIE'S DIRK

By Eden Phillpotts

When intellect is seated on a placid brow, honesty looks out of the eyes beneath, and humour lurks at the corners of the resolute mouth below, we are conscious that a man confronts us.

Such were the lineaments of John Ringrose, Detective-Inspector of New Scotland Yard; and to his portrait may be added dark hair on a big, broad head, and a small, well-knit, sturdy body of the middle size.

Though travelling to a new case, the matter did not occupy his mind at this juncture. He smoked his pipe and read industriously the pages of a weekly journal devoted to the culture of fruit. Already John dreamed of a garden, where should grow pears and apples, peaches and plums; but the time was not yet. He stood still on the threshold of his strange career and had been but recently promoted to an inspectorship.

The train pursued a leisurely way through rural scenery. It stopped near hamlets and at halts; then a guard called 'Twambley,' and John Ringrose rose, folded his railway rug, gripped his large suit-case, and alighted.

An inspector of police was standing on the platform, and beside him a tall, fair young man clad in tweed knickerbockers. He had sloping shoulders and a slight stoop. His flaxen hair curled up round the rim of his cap and he gazed with an anxious expression out of blue and intelligent, though troubled, eyes. He was handsome in a conventional

fashion, but revealed a temperament easily excited and lacking in balance. One had guessed him to be an artist of some sort. Rugrose approached the couple, introduced himself, and shook the police-man's hand.

'You'll be Mr. Inspector Burrows, no doubt,' he said, 'and I'm John Rugrose, from the Yard.'

'And welcome,' answered the other officer. He was a grey, bearded, tall man with dark brown eyes and a ruddy countenance.

'I'm thinking you'll eat a meal with me,' said the elder, 'and I'll tell what there is to tell from my point of view. This is Mr. Vincent Mayclew, the nephew of the murdered lady.'

John shook the hand extended to him, to find it delicate and feminine in his grasp. He was a student of hands and declared them eloquent of character.

'My respectful sympathy,' he said. 'A terrible shock, no such things must always be.'

Vincent Mayclew nodded.

'Thank you,' he answered. 'I wanted to see you half a minute. You'll need to be at Greystones a good bit, and it occurred to me you might find it more convenient to stop there. The village and the inn are best part of two miles from us, and should you prefer to stop at the house itself, we can make you comfortable.'

The detective, who had kept his eyes on the speaker while listening to this invitation, expressed his thanks.

'Very considerate, Mr. Mayclew. It may prove the best course; but on the other hand it may not. The days are short and, for some things, we might

gum if I was there, for others we might lose. Probably I'll find it better to do my work from outside.'

He looked at his watch.

'Half after noon,' he said. 'I'll have my talk with Inspector Burrows and be at Greystones at half past two, if you please. Then we can settle the best course of action.'

'Thank you,' replied the youth. He nodded, bade both men 'good day,' and strode off to a motor bicycle standing outside the station.

When he was gone Mr. Burrows spoke.

'You won't want to go into the house for a day or two, if at all. It's an outside job in my opinion, though I can't give any deep reason for saying so, since there is not an outside clue of any sort or kind. But come and eat, and I'll tell you what there is to it on the surface.'

A Ford car swiftly conveyed the men to Twambley, distant a mile from the station. A typical East Devon village was Twambley in the Mire, picturesque, somnolent—the centre of a district where thatch still persisted and where many cottages twinkled with whitewashed or rosy washed faces under old, moss-grown straw. Now the walls were bare of roses and jasmine, for the time was mid January and red mud, rather than rustic beauty, triumphed over Twambley.

Leaving his Ford at the Constabulary Station, Inspector Burrows conveyed the visitor to an inn some hundred yards higher up the street, and there, at the Green Man, over a couple of very tough mutton chops, John learned what the other could tell him.

'Miss Mary Maydew,' began the inspector, 'was

seventy-one years old—a maiden lady in good health. A common object of the countryside you might call her, for she'd lived at Greystone as long as any can remember. One brother she had still alive; but her father, Thomas Maydew—a London lawyer—had quarrelled with his son; and when Thomas died—I duresay half a century ago—he left his money and his estate to his daughter. And she's reigned at Greystone ever since. Her brother—John Maydew—paid her a visit once or twice a year—and it is understood she kept him, giving the man an income. About family particulars Mr. Vincent Maydew will tell you, and also Mr. Fosdike, the lawyer at Exeter.

'Greystone is a big, old-fashioned country house said to date from James I. I don't know whether that's true; but it don't matter. Miss Maydew lived in the west wing, where the kitchen premises lie behind the dwelling-rooms; but a good part of the place, including the big music and dancing hall, the library and museum combined, the billiard-room and, of course, a lot of bedrooms overhead, are shut up.

'The household is very small for a place that size. There's first the dead lady's companion, a Miss Forrester. She's been there a good few years—a very pretty and popular young woman, who has proved a sort of buffer between Miss Maydew and her tenants for a long time. Then there are William and Ann Jay, the butler and his wife. There's only the cook, besides them—an elderly widow woman, the sister of one of my own men. Jane Woodhouse she's called. Outside there's two gardeners and a gardener's boy. They only keep up a bit of garden

round the west wing and, of course, the kitchen garden. The second gardener is also a mechanic and tends the electric light plant. He lives at the cottage at the entrance with his wife and two children.

'The staff waits on the old lady – or did so – and on Miss Forrester. There's no lady's maid and Mrs. Jay looked after Miss Maydew of a night, if she was poorly or wanted anything. But she seldom did, being the old-fashioned, independent sort.'

'And what of Mr. Vincent Maydew?' asked the listener.

'He comes and goes. He lives in London and is said to write books and go in for high art and so on. He's been at Greystone a good deal lately, off and on, and he was there when the fatal thing happened two nights ago. All the inside details you'll get from him, Miss Forrester, and the Jays. And if you want independent information of the family and Miss Forrester, then William Jay can give it, for he's worked for the Maydews all his life and remembers Miss Maydew's father; while if there's anything you want to know about the Jays themselves, I can help you, because they're old friends of my wife and my own.'

John made no attempt to hasten Inspector Burrows. He listened with close attention to his story, and abandoning a struggle with the leathery chops, turned to a large and promising wedge of orange-coloured Cheshire cheese.

'Not a soul in the house was disturbed on the fatal night,' continued the inspector; 'but when Mrs. Jay took in Miss Maydew's early cup of tea, at half-past seven, she found the lady dead. She'd

been stabbed under the left breast—just one deep, wicked wound, that went to the heart and must have killed her instantly, so Doctor Forbes says. The bedclothes had been dragged off her and the knife driven home. There was no struggle and not a thing out of its place. Her bedroom window was open two inches at the top, but that it always would be, winter and summer, and the blind was up as usual, because the last thing the old lady did at night, before she got into bed, was to pull up the blind.

'There was no disorder and nothing unusual anywhere, and not a trace in the room, or passage, or house next morning, to show an intruder. Nor was there a sign of a weapon.

'The doctor judged the old woman had been dead since midnight, or not much later, for she was stone cold when he got to her; but it was a cold night and she being a thin creature, and lying bare like that no doubt the heat soon left her body after the life left it.

'Outside the window there was nothing to show—not a scratch on the window-ledge or bare wall round about, and not a touch upon the flower-bed that runs along the grounds beneath. I, myself, conducted that examination and can testify from long experience that none of the little marks, inevitable if there had been entry or exit from the window, were there. Neither inside nor outside did we find a shadow of a clue.'

'And yet you said, when we met, that this is certainly an outside job?'

'I do say so—for the reason that it can't have been an inside one. Everybody in that house is beyond suspicion. You can take each and turn him,

or her, inside out and you'll find no excuse why they should have killed the old woman. At least, no cause that's known to me, or anybody here. There may be plenty of information waiting for you at Greystone, but, on the face of it, one can see no motives in any case. Miss Maydew was very rich, and all in that house lived by her. Her companion loses her job now; and, unless Vincent Maydew keeps on the old staff, Jay and his wife and Mrs. Woodhouse will be out of very good employment.'

'Vincent Maydew's the heir, then?'

'So I'm given to understand. There's only him and his uncle interested, and William Jay knows for a fact—or did, when he mentioned the family to me six weeks ago in conversation—that the young man was the heir and not John Maydew, the dead lady's brother. However, that may be all different now. You'll find out in due course.'

'And the household all happy and pulling together comfortably?'

'So far as I know. I wouldn't say Jay liked Miss Forrester. What their difference was I never heard, but he gave me the impression that he was a bit jealous of her power over the old woman. An old servant might feel like that if he'd been used to first place and she'd taken the lead and been trusted and consulted more than him.'

'So he might.'

'Don't imagine there was any quarrel, however, because I'm in a position to say there was not. William didn't, perhaps, like Miss Forrester's power over the mistress; but he never said a word against the young woman herself. In fact, she's exceedingly popular at Twambley—a parish

worker and an understanding, kindly young creature. Also a beauty—out of the common handsome.'

'And you found nothing, inspector?'

'Not a solitary thing, Ringrose. Not a spot; not a shirt-button. Somebody went into that room and killed the old woman with a blow; then he left that sleeping house. Nothing was found open next morning—bolts and bars all in their places. The murderer got clean away with it and not a trace of him remained behind.'

'And you honestly believe the people in the house had nothing to do with it?'

'Emphatically. It's purely a matter of motive. If it 's true, as Jay thinks, that Mr. Vincent Maydew is the heir, then you may say he might be glad for his aunt to die; but no sane man can imagine he would hasten the death of one who willed him so well. Besides, look at him; listen to him. He's not that sort. And everybody else in the house and on the staff is a loser by Miss Maydew's death.'

John Ringrose said little; but he perceived that the local man was speaking and arguing on what might be very insufficient knowledge. The situation had yet to be revealed, and he suspected that his course of action would lie along no conventional path and depend upon no material clues. Already, with a strange added sense for which he was famous, the young detective's intuition told him that Mr. Burrows was not within sight of the needful preliminary line of thought.

An hour later John drove out to Greystone and beheld a large, undistinguished house, a portion of which was in occupation. He proceeded on

routine lines, studied the face of the murdered woman in her coffin, and beheld an austere, bleak countenance that even death had been powerless to soften.

The inquest was fixed for the following day, and Ringrose proceeded with preliminaries, leaving his first examination of the living until daylight failed. The theatre of the crime offered no complications. From the large main hall at Greystone, a flight of shallow stairs ascended to the first storey, and at the extreme west end of this corridor Miss Maydew had her private apartments. They consisted of a bedroom and boudoir leading out of it. Other bedrooms extended along the broad passage way of the first floor and faced south, while a service staircase opened not far from the corner occupied by the dead woman and descended to the kitchen premises on the ground floor. Immediately beneath Miss Maydew's bedroom was the dining-room—a comparatively small chamber used for that purpose. The deceased lady had entertained but little and the larger public apartments were all closed.

Two others had slept on the upper floor upon the night of the murder. Miss Juanita Forrester occupied a bedroom distant but three doors from her employer's chamber; while Vincent Maydew always chose the same apartment when visiting his aunt—an eastern-facing room at the other end of the main corridor. Eight empty rooms separated his apartment from Miss Forrester's. The servants slept in the rear of the house, Jay and his wife occupying one north-facing room, while the bedroom of Mrs. Woodhouse was not far distant.

The whole radius of occupation, as compared with the total bulk of the house, was absurdly restricted. Half a dozen persons only inhabited a mansion that might have furnished accommodation for half a hundred.

Ringrose, having inspected the chamber of the crime and the adjacent boudoir, made a tour of the house and met Miss Forrester and the domestic servants. Juanita Forrester, to whom Mr. Maydew introduced him over a cup of tea, offered a challenge during the first five minutes of their meeting. She was dark and, so she told him, very much like her Spanish mother. 'A poor copy,' she said. Her parents were no more, and her father's death leaving the young woman penniless, she was forced to earn her own living. An advertisement had attracted her, and on visiting Miss Maydew, then in search of a new companion, she satisfied the stern old lady and obtained the post.

The girl's remarkable frankness, contrasted with Vincent Maydew's obvious distress, impressed Ringrose at this brief preliminary interview. Juanita was a pretty woman, typically Spanish. She displayed a small and perfect figure, with a pale, oval face and immense wealth of black hair piled over her white forehead and supported by a black tortoiseshell comb. Her eyes were marvellous, and John had never seen such a pair; while her full-lipped but firm mouth and perfect little nose completed a countenance of unusual beauty.

Her expression was placid, yet not devoid of pride, and her gaze direct and steadfast. She revealed no particular sorrow at the disaster and was self-contained but deeply interested.

'I never liked Miss Maydew,' she said, speaking in level and unemotional tones. 'She was a bitter, unkind old woman, with no milk of human kindness in her. A tyrant, and used her power unjustly. But for circumstances which Mr. Maydew will give you I should long since have left her. No companion ever stayed here as long as I. But it served my purpose to remain, for personal reasons concerning which there need be no secrecy. These you will hear.'

'In your relations with the lady you can form no conclusions as to the reason for her death, nor think of anything to help me?' asked Ringrose, but she shook her head.

'I understand what you mean. I answered many of her letters, but was not in her secrets—if she had any. I don't think she had. She was direct and open in all her dealings—cruelly so sometimes. She loved power. I did what I could, in my very small way, for tenants, and often helped them with her. I'm afraid many humble people rather hated her, for she was hard and grasping; but it is impossible for me to point to anybody who hated her enough to kill her. Twambley people are all easy-going and law-abiding in my experience.'

'You can form no theory of this murder?'

'None, Mr. Ringrose. Vincent and I have tried hard to do so. So has Mr. Burrows; so has Mr. Mainprice, the bailiff; so has William, the butler. Perhaps William and his wife, Ann, knew her better than anybody.'

'Apart from the possibility,' continued Vincent Maydew, 'there are the facts. Inspector Burrows thinks it was somebody from outside, since no-

body from inside can be suspected. But how did they get in, and, still more difficult to understand, how did they get out again and leave no window or door open to show it?'

They explained the geography of the house, while Ringrose listened with interest. Juanita was sagacious and logical. No personal sorrow confused her clarity. She appeared profoundly interested but utterly unmoved, while her companion, the fair young man, made no attempt to hide his mingled emotions. It was not, however, the death of his aunt which caused his obvious anxiety and concern. He spoke of her with pity, but without regret. The secrets of his uneasiness remained to be learned. Their first interview extended only over a cup of tea, but it decided Ringrose in a main particular. He determined to come to Greystone and operate from within. His decision was not, however, imparted to Maydew until he had seen the indoor servants.

Mr. Jay proved a commonplace little man, with a dull, putty-coloured face, white whiskers, a dry, old-maidish manner, a sharp, long nose, and a high forehead. People said he had framed himself upon his mistress. But while servile to his betters, he was suspected of tyranny behind the scenes. He proved voluble, and John discovered that in the kitchen, as above stairs, interest in the crime was great, though sorrow for the sufferer little. Only Mrs. Jay appeared to feel the catastrophe, but in her case self-pity had loosened tears. She it was who had found her dead mistress and suffered from the shock of that horrible experience. She was a thin, grey-haired woman, nervous and irresponsible.

William, in measured phrases and with a sort of dry unction, told his tale; but when asked if his knowledge of Miss Maydew and her affairs sufficed to inspire a theory, or prompt to suggestions, he could only shake his head.

'To me it's a bigger puzzle than it might be to most,' said Mr. Jay, 'because of my inner knowledge. It happens that me and Inspector Burrows are old friends, and so he went into it with me pretty deep. We don't agree and, while my heart is with him, if you understand, my head is not.'

'You're in a dilemma about it?'

'That's the word. This thing was done either from inside or from outside, Mr. Detective. So far so good. But there's everything to show it couldn't have been done from inside, and yet again there's everything to show it couldn't have been done from outside.'

'Suppose we assume it was done from outside —with help from inside?'

'A clever thought, and it would do away with one difficulty, but not the other. If it was done with help from outside, that argues that somebody in the house would deliberately have lent a hand to murder Miss Maydew, and from that to doing the deed wouldn't be far. The will would be there. There's five people might have let a murderer in and showed him where she was, and let him out after he'd killed her without waking the rest. Strictly speaking, there's four, because husband and wife are one, and it would have been as difficult for me to leave my partner without waking her as it would have been for her to leave me, sleeping as we do in a four-post bed.

'Take 'em one by one. Mr. Vincent Maydew will tell you about the family complications, because that's no business of mine, and what I might hear, or not hear, when waiting on the family, is beside the question. But as to him, you could swear on your oath he wouldn't kill a fly, let alone his aunt, whatever she'd done to vex him. He's not even a sportsman—all for poetry and art and so on—a bit of a namby, to say it kindly. He'd think twice before he'd kill a wasp, let alone an old woman. Then there's Miss Juanita Forrester, been here four years. She's foreign on her mother's side, no doubt—Spanish—but no fellow-creature ever won the affection of a place like what she has done at Greystone and all round about. A heart of gold, you may say, and never did any man, woman, or child quarrel with the gentle creature.'

'You couldn't,' declared Mrs. Jay. 'Wonderful human she is for such a young thing. Many a time she's showed pity for me and Jane, the cook, when Miss Maydew sent out hard, beastly, bullying messages. She's brought 'em, as in duty bound, but she's taken the edge off 'em. And everybody Mr. Mainprice, the bailiff, included—will tell you she's everlasting on the side of kindness and gentleness. She's only stopped with such an employer for her wages and a comfortable home, I reckon.'

'That's the point,' added William. 'That lets her out, just as it lets me and my wife and Jane out. We all suffered Miss Maydew because we had our living to earn and weren't likely to kill the goose that laid the golden eggs. So you may take it in reason that none of us would have done it, nor yet help to do it, even if we was built to be

criminals. But where are we, then? Up against the fact it weren't done from inside, or with help from inside. And yet, when Burrows says it was done from outside, I'm in a position to swear that not a bolt, or bar, or window-catch was out of place. Master himself went round with me when my wife brought the fatal news.'

'You regard Mr. Maydew as your master now, then?' asked the detective.

'Yes, sir; Mr. Vincent is the master, so far as we yet know.'

Ringrose did not press him further.

'I'm coming to stop here for the present,' he said, and the butler and his wife expressed satisfaction at the fact. He then spoke with Mrs. Woodhouse, the cook, and found her chatty, civil, and indifferent. Jane was a big, amiable woman of handsome presence and well-mannered. She had no opinions on the subject, but appeared chiefly interested concerning her late mistress' fate in the world to come.

'I'm a religious creature,' she explained, 'and I'm fearing that a hard case like Miss Maydew, cut off so sudden, may wake up to a very sharp reminder in the next world. However, thank Heaven, there's pardon for all there. But you'd say she'll take a lot of forgiving when the Books be opened.'

Ringrose announced his determination to stay at Greystone presently, and Vincent Maydew accepted it without demur. Of all beneath that roof, the present master of it seemed most downcast and perturbed. Now the day was gone and John Ringrose returned to Twambley beside Inspector Burrows, who had arrived with his car.

John declared himself as at present without light and, leaving the inspector after a second cup of tea, carried his suit-case up to Greystone and found a room prepared for him.

He dined with Maydew and Miss Forrester, and after the lady had left them, the young man took Ringrose to a small study, gave him a good cigar, and prepared to tell his part of the story.

Vincent Maydew spoke clearly, yet with a measure of nervousness and even dread. His mind was fretted and his concern appeared to rise from private thoughts, rather than out of the narrative he unfolded for the detective's ear.

'The situation is simple now,' he said, 'thanks to an extraordinary coincidence. My uncle, John Maydew, died three days ago—a natural death. I only heard the fact by this morning's post. But I will come to what that means in a moment. The situation a week ago was this. There were then three of my family living. Now I alone remain. I enjoyed my aunt's confidence and respect, for though she did not much value my literary work, she knew me to be a serious man and a steady one. I was her heir, while her brother received from her an allowance of one thousand a year and no more. This she intended to continue for his life. They were quite friendly, and Uncle John visited his sister twice a year; but he was a bachelor and she held her allowance enough for him, because she knew that he did nothing, and she hated an idle man, even if he were old. That Uncle John was intemperate and unwise she did not know, for he was very careful to conceal the fact when he came to see her.

'So things stood, and then came the complication.

'I fell in love with Juanita—Miss Forrester—and could not see why on earth I should not win her, when I found my love returned. Juanita, however, believed—rightly as time proved—that my aunt would object to such an engagement. However, I was not prepared to wait for ever, and after a secret betrothal extending over more than a year, I told my future wife that there was no rational ground for further delay. We loved each other with absolute devotion, and, while only a companion to Miss Maydew, she was my life to me.

'A week ago I informed Aunt Mary that I proposed to wed Juanita as soon as she could find another companion to suit her. The result was appalling. I need not go over the fearful row, but I was accused of every sort of crime, and Miss Maydew absolutely declined to sanction the engagement. Juanita pleaded in vain. The old woman blamed her bitterly enough; but me she attacked with that ferocious and venomous temper common to her when the least incident threatened her convenience, or crossed her will. She told me plainly that she should disinherit me if I took Juanita from her, and at last a succession of violent scenes culminated with Juanita finally on my side.

'What man could do less? My aunt was sound as a bell and good at least for another ten years. I expressed my sorrow, but was firm. Then she sent for her lawyer, Mr. Fosdike, from Exeter, and made a new will, leaving all her property to her brother.

'On the morning which found her dead, I was

leaving Greystone for good, and Juanita, at my wish,was remaining until it pleased my aunt to dismiss her. Of course, I stopped when we heard the terrible news. And now Fate has willed this extraordinary sequel. My uncle never lived to know what Miss Maydew had done. He was actually dead a few hours before she did it. There was no bequest of the residue of Miss Maydew's fortune. She had made an absolute bequest of everything to John Maydew; but that, of course, becomes inoperative, because he predeceased her. As her next-of-kin, therefore, everything passes to me.'

The young man stopped and sighed.

'That 's all there is to tell, I think; and whether it will help you I know not.'

'It is very possible that it may,' answered Ringrose. 'At any rate, after the inquest and a search round to-morrow, I'll see Miss Maydew's lawyer and the new will. You never know where you may get a ray of light. At any rate, the legal position is clear. Owing to the death of John Maydew before his sister signed, the bequest to him lapses and falls into the residue. But you say there is none, so, as next-of-kin, you stand exactly where you did, and her purpose to cut you out was defeated. Thank you for this lucid summary. And now tell me what 's biting you, as the Americans say. This shocking affair naturally saddens you, especially as relations were so badly strained at the finish; but there 's more to your distress than that.'

Maydew stared and flushed; then he recovered himself.

'You are mistaken. I'm all right. Nothing but natural concern and sorrow for this awful mystery

troubles me. I can't let a passing estrangement come between me and the long memory of the past. She was hard and difficult, but I had little cause to hate her, and at the worst I never actually hated her. I was only deeply distressed that I had to run counter to her wishes.'

Ringrose did not pursue the subject.

'So much the better; I'm glad I was wrong,' he said. 'I only thought you might be hiding something you held not pertinent to the case; but don't do that, Mr. Maydew. The most unexpected and apparently trivial facts often contain the kernel of the nut.'

'I can understand they might,' answered the other. 'Be very sure, if anything occurs to me as remotely useful, you shall be the first to know it.'

'You are, of course, in complete understanding with Miss Forrester?'

'Complete and absolute,' replied Vincent. 'We are one, heart and soul.'

'Tell me exactly when you heard of your uncle's death, and from whom.'

'This morning, by the first post. The news was somewhat delayed, as Uncle John's lawyers were not informed of his death until twenty-four hours after it had happened. They had, of course, already heard of this murder through the newspapers, and for another day didn't know whom to write to. Then Uncle John's landlady told them about me, and they wrote to me at Greystone, directing the letter to be forwarded if I were not here.'

He took the letter of which he spoke from a pocket-book and handed it to his visitor.

The detective scanned the note and returned it.

They chatted for another half-hour and then John Ringrose decided that he would go to bed. Their attitude was cordial on the elder's side, restrained and somewhat inconsequent on the part of his host. But Maydew presently conducted the visitor to his apartment, expressed hopes that all was as he desired it, and asked him if he would breakfast in his own room or join Juanita and himself. Ringrose preferred the latter course.

'Let me breakfast with you,' he said. 'And the later the better.'

'Nine too early?'

'That will do exceedingly well,' answered the detective, who had made private plans for the morning.

He was up and dressed at six, and as the light increased had worked industriously through the silent house for an hour and more before any domestic appeared. Neither the upper floor nor the scene of the murder occupied him; he devoted the early hours of a grey and very cold morning to examination of the dwelling-rooms. There were no bulbs in the electric sconces, but he opened shutters and conducted a general investigation, which ended at a huge apartment devoted to books and containing glass cases, wherein were stored a mixed collection of curiosities from all lands.

The great chamber lay deserted and deep in dust. A gallery lifted some feet above the top of the bookshelves, ran round the walls, and the place was lighted from a lantern of frosted glass in the roof.

Ringrose readily perceived that the bygone head of the family was responsible for a collection which

had suffered neglect since his departure. He examined the receptacles with mild astonishment at the heterogeneous curios assembled within them; then something arrested him and he stopped and bent over a show-case situate immediately beneath the central dome. Not a curiosity, but a missing one, had challenged his attention. Care and patience marked the collection and everything was labelled, while to many objects were attached information concerning them. Thus an empty card immediately arrested the eye. Something had disappeared from its place, and the inquirer was concerned to know what. The lid of the glass showcase opened to his touch and he drew forth a card and read the few words neatly printed upon it. They proved exceedingly significant.

The empty place had held a dirk, 'Once the authentic property of Prince Charlie.'

John Ringrose restored the card to its place. He observed that the vanished weapon had been fastened to the card with a piece of pink tape, and that the tape had been cut to liberate it. A fragment only remained. The discovery ended his present investigation within doors. The dawn had broken, the sky was burning redly to the East, and he presently let himself through a French window in the disused great drawing-room, and strolled the terrace. A clue so simple and direct as the missing dirk created natural mistrust. John told himself that such things do not happen. He suspected an ingenious attempt to hoodwink him, but could not feel sure, since the possibility that he would examine the contents of the old and neglected collection with close care must have seemed

doubtful to any interested in his actions. Moreover, an explanation might be immediately forthcoming, did he seek it from the household.

At breakfast he met his host and Juanita. The girl was pale and dressed in black, and the young man appeared if possible more anxious than on the preceeding day. Miss Forrester, however, showed no perturbation. She was frankly interested in the inquest, timed for noon, and she asked John various questions concerning the procedure of the inquiry.

He said nothing of his morning's work within the house, and studied the man and woman carefully. His unique gift, to bring a human touch into every relation with his fellow-creatures, served the detective as usual. He found the tension relax and soon established himself in friendly relations with Juanita. She interested him least, however, for her complete self-possession, and a certain directness of speech and thought were obviously natural and not assumed. The young woman made no pretence of sorrow, and John perceived that, like himself, she was secretly a little puzzled by her sweetheart. Their common affection neither attempted to conceal. They were passionately in love, but while the course of events and the sequel to the tragedy now meant certain happiness for Juanita, she indicated in some subtle fashion that she could not fathom Vincent Maydew's profound depression.

Ringrose perceived this and it interested him. That the young man should be agitated and even oppressed by the terrible event that had lifted his problems off his shoulders was not strange, but why such sustained melancholy and obvious anxiety? There was a mystery here whose significance, John

already suspected, would, if explained, help him upon his way.

Of one thing the detective was now secretly assured: the crime, if not actually committed by a member of the dead woman's household, had been assisted from within. That the assassin had come from without remained a probability, but he had not worked without help, and Ringrose felt already confident that a large measure of the truth might be known to somebody with whom he had already spoken. As yet he associated none of them more than another with the commission of the deed, but began to believe that, if anybody in reality knew anything at all, it was Vincent Maydew.

After breakfast he examined the upper floor with close scrutiny, and visited not only each of the occupied chambers, but also those for many years disused. The result of these investigations John kept to himself, and, of course, he pursued them alone. But they presented him with two interesting discoveries: the splintered edge of a broken board in the floor of Juanita Forrester's bedroom cupboard, and a piece of pink tape.

The inquest, conducted in the great drawing-room, pursued its way and threw no light, unless upon the mind of the detective, who silently attended it. The coroner, a sagacious and capable man, ruled his court with tact and sympathy. Each witness gave an explicit account from his or her own point of view. But Miss Forrester's evidence proved the most interesting. With absolute frankness she revealed the inner situation of those chiefly concerned—her lover and herself—and related the family quarrel and the attitude of the dead

woman to her nephew's announcement of his engagement. She told all that Ringrose had heard on the previous evening from Vincent Maydew, and John was not dead to the deep attention with which the young man listened while his sweetheart spoke. It appeared that she had been nearer to the heart of the tragedy than anybody imagined.

'After that terrible conflict between Mr. Maydew and his aunt,' said Juanita, 'I could not sleep, and on the night of Miss Maydew's death I was faced with another sleepless night, because Mr. Vincent was leaving that day. At two o'clock in the morning I left my room, lighted a candle, and went down into the library for something to read, that I might distract my mind and get to sleep. I found a book; and then I left the great library and went into the small one, used as a dining-room. From the sideboard I took some biscuits and poured myself out a glass of port wine from the decanter. I ate the biscuits, drank the wine, and went upstairs again with my book.

'It was then, just as I reached the corridor at the top of the great flight of stairs, that I thought I heard a sound in the passage, at the far end, near Miss Maydew's corner of the corridor. It was a sound like the quiet shutting of a door. I left my book on a console table, that stands opposite the top of the staircase, and went to Miss Maydew's door. Everything was quiet, and I then opened the swing door on the opposite side of the corridor, which gives upon the service staircase. I went to the top of the service staircase and listened, but heard nothing. I half fancied I saw the glimmer of a light below, but I was holding my own candle all

the time and could not be sure the light came from another. I blew out my own candle, but the light if light there was had vanished. Everything was quite silent and quite dark.

'I stood for a few moments listening, then went back to bed with my book. I must have gone to sleep reading it, for when I was called, Ann—Mrs. Jay—laughed at me and said I had forgotten to turn out the electric light. She had, of course, not been to her mistress then. She always called me first.'

The coroner put various questions upon this evidence, but Juanita had nothing to add to it, and its value appeared negative, since both the sound and the light were an impression rather than a conviction in her mind.

Ringrose perceived that Maydew showed signs of relief when his sweetheart's testimony and examination concluded. The young man himself had little to say, save that on hearing the news he had risen instantly and hunted the house with William. The servants only reported what the police already knew.

Mr. Fosdike, Miss Maydew's lawyer, spoke as to the new will and, when opportunity offered, agreed to let John Ringrose see the document on the following day. The police reiterated their belief that the murder had been committed from out-side, though not a trace of evidence existed to support it; but the staff stood on friendly terms with members of the Force, and the coroner pointed out that there existed nobody within Greystone who could have gained any advantage from Mary Maydew's death save, indeed, Vincent Maydew. Vincent himself admitted how on the night of the murder, he

was ignorant of his uncle's end, and still imagined that he had lost all. Ringrose observed that the young man created no suspicion in the minds of the jury or the police by this statement.

The inquest was adjourned for a fortnight and the proceedings terminated.

It was reserved for the detective's next private interview with his host to quicken interest at last and create for John a sensation far beyond any that his business had, as yet, brought him. That, however, did not come till night.

During the afternoon he again busied himself in the house, yet, for personal reasons, kept severely aloof from the chief occupants. He was now in doubt before a curious conflict of clues and spent most of his time with the Jays, accepting the housekeeper's invitation to tea and listening to the old woman's conversation. He also visited the library and museum a second time for his own purpose and, discovering a second dirk fixed to a card, which recorded its historical interest, removed the weapon, wrapped it up in his pocket handkerchief, and presently returning to the chamber on the ground floor, where the dead woman lay, again examined the body.

He left the house after dark and called upon the local practitioner a Dr. Forbes, who had given evidence of the death wound at the inquest.

He was back at Greystone in time for dinner, at which meal Vincent Maydew appeared more silent than on the previous night. He ate little, but drank rather heavily. It was evident that Juanita felt increased anxiety on his account, and desired private speech with Ringrose. The meal ended, he

prepared to give her the opportunity she sought, but then became aware that Vincent Maydew had marked her wish. It was easy for the girl's lover to frustrate any possible private interview at this moment, and he took care to do so.

Explaining that he wanted some immediate conversation with the detective, Vincent drew John away to the small sitting-room, and when coffee and liqueurs were served and Ringrose had lighted a cigar, Maydew locked the door and plunged into a hurried narrative. He was very pale; his drink had made him perspire and he mopped his face as he spoke.

'Mr. Ringrose,' began the young man, 'I can stand this no longer. I have something to say to you, and I have something to offer you. I'm not so much concerned for myself as another; that's why I want to couple a big proposal with what I have to tell you. Do not feel annoyed—I implore you to keep an open mind. When you recognize my situation your humanity will at least prevent you from being angry with me—or anybody. I have no right to ask for the least sacrifice of principle from you, and it lies entirely in your power to ignore my suggestion; but I know you are too generous not to understand it, and far too acute not to see that I plead for another rather than myself.'

He stopped a moment, but Ringrose did not speak. Then Maydew confessed to the crime.

'I killed my aunt in a moment of stark aberration. The deed is done, and I am faced with the consequences; but all that matters now is this: that I insist upon leaving the sequel in your hands. Do you gather my meaning, Mr. Ringrose?'

The detective regarded him without speech for a moment. Then he spoke.

'I think so; but you had better make it clearer.'

'In a word, then, I yielded to a passing wave of irrational hate against the old woman who had treated me so damnably, and feeling assured that the world would be better without her, I destroyed her. Some devil played with me, and I committed a cowardly and infernal crime on the spur of passion, convinced that I did evil that good might come. The irony of the situation when I heard my uncle was dead you will appreciate. I worked swiftly, yet believed that I had laid my plans so perfectly that discovery must prove impossible. Now I know otherwise. I know you will presently discover the truth, and so confess to save you any more trouble.'

Ringrose summoned a picture to his mind and smiled internally. It was a vision that must have appeared very inappropriate to any beholder less subtle than himself. He saw a hen partridge pretending to be wounded and fluttering clumsily along the ground, to distract an enemy from her chickens. But a moment later this theory of the situation was clouded, for the young man made swift and complete response to the obvious challenge now offered.

'You say you killed the old lady, Mr. Maydew. Can you prove it?' asked John, and his question met instant answer, for rising, Maydew proceeded to a small desk, unlocked it, and then moved an invisible spring which revealed a secret drawer. Within this receptacle lay an object wrapped in paper, and he now handed the parcel to Ringrose.

'I killed Mary Maydew with that dirk,' he said quietly. 'I took it from the museum—the collec-

tion made by my grandfather. It is a dagger which is supposed to have been the property of Prince Charlie. I had meant, of course, to put it back in its place. You will see the card from which I took it if you examine the large central case in the library.'

Ringrose examined the weapon. The haft was of chased silver, the head, a huge golden cairngorm that shone and sparkled. The blade was of blue steel, and blood had dried upon it.

'You would soon have proved me guilty,' continued the criminal quietly. 'I quickly saw that my fancied security was vain. And the revelation of what such work as this means to the sinner is so terrible that, if I had to consider myself alone, I should have either confessed within twenty-four hours of the crime, or destroyed myself. But the situation is terribly complicated for me by a fellow-creature. I could escape my own sufferings by death, and my remorse would end with my life; but if my life ends, another precious and innocent life will practically end with it. Knowledge of the truth must assuredly kill Juanita. It is not that I should lose her; the point seems to be this: that her life is ruined if this becomes known, and so the innocent suffers far more terribly than it is possible for the guilty to do. Life to me, you understand, is henceforth a punishment rather than a boon. I should already have ended my existence but for the thought of her agony. For her sake only I am stripping the truth naked and putting myself in your hands.'

The listener showed less concern than might have been expected before a situation so tragical.

'And what follows?' he asked.

'What follows is this, Mr. Ringrose. To me it appears an ethical question, and so I hope and pray it may appear to you. That the righteous should suffer for the guilty is a commonplace. No man can sin as I have sinned and endure the consequences alone. Many innocent persons are called to a punishment they did not deserve, and my one thought at present—my one resolve—is to save others from the consequences of my crime to the best of my power. That may be done by myself in every case save one. The servants will receive money and adequate pensions in any case. They lose nothing; but, if the truth becomes known, then a punishment that is far worse than the sentence of death falls on Juanita. Only for her I plead. Do believe that. Life, even with her, must now be incomparably more terrible for me than swift and merciful death. But for her sake I plead to live because the truth would destroy her and cover that guiltless head with shame. Her temperament is such that knowledge of this thing would bring a measure of agony impossible to describe. Her reason might well succumb to it; or, unable to face such an appalling situation, she might take her own life. She is made of precious stuff, Mr. Ringrose, and rather than that she should be called to drink this cup, I would live—for her sake alone.'

The other listened intently. He studied every word and every gesture that accompanied it. He indicated that he felt much impressed.

'You ask me to respect your secret and condone your crime?' he said, when the young man ceased.

'For the human reason that I have given. For

my unfortunate girl alone. I should not beg for my own sake. I have no wish to live now. You know I have spoken the truth. I am only concerned to do right, and Juanita's life is a thousand times more precious to the world than mine. Rather than that she shall be destroyed, I am prepared to live; and seeing that justice—a justice above any law of man—cries out for Juanita, I implore you to meet me. I would press the ethical side upon you, Mr. Ringrose. Your duty lies on another plane, and no doubt you do it as a rule, sternly regardless of consequences; but you are not a machine only; you are a man of genius, and I have seen enough of you to know that humanity means much to you.'

'Granted; but duty often clashes with inclination,' replied John, taking another cigar. 'An action may have two sides and look wrong from one aspect, right from another. For the sake of argument, suppose I fail to solve this case. I am perhaps doing a humane thing—a thing which might, or might not, be justified on strictly moral grounds; but I am none the less being false to myself and my employers. And that is not all. Failure in a case, which already began to resolve its difficulties pretty swiftly, means a great deal more than a doubtful hope that I may have done rightly by pretending to fail. It means that punishment for your crime falls on me also. I fail where I ought to succeed; I deliberately permit a black mark to be scored against me where it matters most—at Headquarters. I celebrate my promotion to a detective-inspectorship by a very inefficient piece of work. Perhaps that situation had not occurred to you?'

'It had. I recognize it. I recognized it from the

first. I have imagination to see how this must look in your professional eyes, and had you been a different sort of man I should have felt the case was hopeless. But you revealed a heart and a deep human sense of sympathy. That is what I am coming to now. You concede that for the sake of the innocent, the crime might reasonably be concealed, and you know that concealment is by no means a blessing or boon to the criminal. The rights and wrongs of concealment do not eliminate each other and leave the situation doubtful. Everything points to the fact that concealment in this case is the highest justice and brings the greatest good to the innocent. That only leaves your personal position; and I venture to think that the wrong your reputation undoubtedly suffers—the actual injustice done to you by concealment may be regarded purely as a matter of business.'

Ringrose nodded.

'It is a point of view,' he said.

'One case in your career amounts to little,' argued Maydew, with increasing hope. 'Everybody knows that you are an extraordinary man, and probably your next mystery will be solved with such speed and brilliance that this affair must quickly be forgotten. So confident I am of that, and so sure that failure in this affair cannot really harm anything but your natural self-esteem, that I feel it in no sense a slight or reflection upon your honour to make it a question of money. I insist again that this is no selfish bargain. My crime will never torment me less than now; but even legal justice should be rightly concerned with the welfare of the innocent before the destruction of the

guilty. I am a rich man, and if, knowing that the highest, purest honour and justice are on your side, you can reduce your own loss in the matter to a financial figure, I should indeed thank Heaven.'

For a full minute John Ringrose made no reply. He smoked with his eyes on the blood-stained knife lying on the table before him. Maydew rose after his appeal and wandered the room restlessly.

'Sit down and light your cigar,' began the detective at length. 'These are interesting and illuminating things you tell me. There is nothing like breadth of vision and, be it as it may, I respect your confidence and admit the strength of your position on strictly ethical grounds. But what is your view on my side? What sort of solatium should you judge may fairly be offered for my obvious loss of credit?'

'I leave it to you, Mr. Ringrose.'

'They say every man has his price. One must weigh the advantage of permanent improvement to one's income, against depreciation of one's credit in business.'

'A transitory depreciation; but don't speak of having your price, Mr. Ringrose; I couldn't buy you and I well know it. The sole question is, can Juanita's life tempt you? Her very existence is involved. I offer a perfectly reasonable deal that reflects in no way at all on your character -or, I would argue, on mine either.'

Mr. Maydew rose, returned to his private desk and produced a cheque-book, while unseen the detective suffered his features to relax into a genial grin. The smile relieved him; but his face was again composed when his host returned to the lamplight.

'I have arranged with Mr. Fosdike,' he said, 'to have access to capital as it may be required; but I imagine a transaction of this magnitude must be carried out with considerable caution.'

'I think so. There is no hurry. There are ways of doing these things. I only need your cheque as evidence of good faith. I shall not, of course, cash it. You may pay me the sum at issue in another way later—with foreign bonds to bearer, or securities you can privately make over. For the moment your cheque will merely be a guarantee of indebtedness.'

Mr. Maydew took up his pen.

'Name the figure, then.'

'Shall we say ten thousand?'

A wave of thankfulness which he was quite powerless to hide, brought fleeting colour to the young man's face. It seemed that the weight of his sufferings already began to lighten, despite his recent assurance that they never would.

'No,' he said, 'we will not say ten thousand; we will say twenty thousand, Mr. Ringrose.'

'You are generous.'

'I am only just. May I never write a cheque with more deep a sense of obligation than I write this one.'

He drew the cheque and pushed it across the table.

'I am in your hands,' he said, 'and the welfare of one who is far more to me than my life lies also in your hands.'

'I perfectly understand. You need feel no more anxiety, either on her behalf or your own. The future should prove absolutely clear for you both,

Mr. Maydew; but we have none the less got to consider the present from my point of view. There are a few little considerations. We must cover our tracks, for the benefit of those who might not appreciate the high ethical standpoint that has determined our course of action. Your task is quite simple. I shall be busy here—no doubt fruitlessly poking about and following up clues and so forth; but the clue you so naturally regard as of supreme significance and which you have made me a present of, must return to its accustomed place, and be a clue no more. That is all I require from you. Cleanse it carefully and to-night, when everybody has retired, return it to the central cabinet from which you say you took it.'

He picked up the cheque, ran his eye over it, then doubled it up and put it in his pocket.

'And now good-night, Mr. Maydew, and you may sleep in peace.'

'I shall sleep as I have not slept for many days,' replied the other, shaking the hand extended with warm pressure; and then, as though conscious that his relief was exaggerated, he relapsed and strove to conceal it.

'My own sufferings remain,' he declared, 'but they must be lessened by the assurance that my future wife will not be called upon to suffer.'

'Time is a great healer,' answered Ringrose drily. Concealing the dirk, Vincent Maydew rang for spirits, and having spent another half-hour together, the men separated for the night. But Maydew's work was not yet done. Alone in his own room he cleaned the knife with soap and water and, at two o'clock in the morning, restored it to its

place. He was strangely careless of details, however, and fastened it back upon the card with a piece of brown twine.

Though not a religious man, the young fellow spent full twenty minutes on his knees before finally sinking to sleep; but his prophecy of a good night was not fulfilled, and dawn had broken before an exhausted mind permitted him to slumber.

On the following day Ringrose spent some hours in Exeter and proceeded as though his private meeting with young Maydew had not taken place. He was apparently anxious to learn more than either Vincent Maydew or his betrothed could tell him, and the old family lawyer found himself invited to give all particulars concerning the making of the new will.

'She was an obdurate client,' said Mr. Fosdike, a bald, big man with clean-shaven and pendulous cheeks, 'and though I understood her, I was usually powerless to influence her. Fiery people, as a rule, between their conflagrations, are reasonable, and will undo in sane moments what they did when "outside themselves," as we say. Miss Maydew, however, was both short-tempered and obstinate. She would do unjust things in a rage and stick to them afterwards for pride. A sort of insensate vanity — common in men, but rather rare in women — always made her cleave to a decision, however mistaken. One could not shake her. It was a foolish boast of hers that she had never found the need to apologize in her life! So the new will would most certainly have stood had she lived. I prepared it at her wish. She might have made another will later and appointed some one else her legatee in-

stead of John Maydew, her brother; but she would never have forgiven Vincent Maydew or restored him to his position as residuary legatee. He had crossed her; and those who crossed my client were never pardoned.'

'You prepared this new will and went down yourself with it?' asked Ringrose, considering the document.

'That is so. One had to watch things with the lady. Any failure on my part to comply with her demands would have meant speedy loss of a valuable estate. She was quite capable of taking Greystone out of my hands at a moment's warning; and had she done that, nothing on earth would ever have induced her to restore the conduct of her affairs to me.'

'There was no secret about this will?'

'None whatever. She told her nephew that he must choose between her and her companion, and gave him exactly twelve hours in which to do so. She could keep in a passion longer than anybody I have ever known. It is an exhausting ordeal for most people; but Miss Maydew seemed to burn with an incandescent rage which failed to consume her dreadful energy. The will, as you see, was exceedingly brief. Before she signed it, I reminded her of various bequests and certain obligations—directions from her late father—which were handed down in the existing will: but all she said was that they could wait and be restored by codicils, if she so wished.

'"Life is uncertain," she declared in her icy voice—a voice that always made you feel as though the window were open and an east wind blowing. "Life

is uncertain, and I cannot sleep until this matter is determined and my nephew, Vincent Maydew, aware of his situation." At a later date she intended to reconsider a few minor points from her former will, which she had not opened for some years; but for the moment all she was concerned with was the blow to Vincent. That struck, and her brother installed as legatee, she grew calmer. By the irony of chance, as you know, her brother predeceased her, and was actually dead before the will came to be signed. Thus the thing she felt chiefly concerned to do was not done, and Maydew, I am glad to say, is not disinherited. Indeed, he is a gainer.'

'Who is Alfred Warner?' asked John Ringrose, with his eyes on the will.

'My clerk. He went down with the document when all was done, and he and William Jay attested Miss Maydew's signature.'

'Was the former will destroyed?'

'She had specially directed me to preserve it, that she might read it on a future occasion. It embraced certain injunctions handed down by her late father, and had to do with the development of the property and other points which it was only right the future heir respected, whomsoever he might be.'

'Exactly,' said John. 'And now, of course, this will goes before Vincent Maydew, and he will respect its provisions. I will ask you to let me see it.'

'Most certainly. It can hardly bear on the crime, however.'

'On the contrary, I have reason to think it might.'

The lawyer fetched it and his visitor spent half an hour in careful study of the document. He made no comment whatever.

His scrutiny completed, John turned to a decanter of sherry and two glasses which had stood at his elbow since the beginning of their conversation. He broke a biscuit and the lawyer poured out two glasses of wine.

'We shall meet again,' said the visitor; 'and it is my earnest hope that, before we do so, I may have proceeded and found definite clues to this crime. I thank you. You may have assisted me more than you guess.'

'Nothing would give me greater satisfaction,' declared the other; 'but I confess I see no ray of light. You will probably find the criminal outside Greystone, if Providence wills that he should be discovered.'

'A crime is not a conjuring trick, Mr. Fosdike. It often appears to defy natural laws and argue supernatural interference with reality. But the police never permit any supernatural theory either to challenge or defeat them. We argue that the seemingly impossible means only that the clue, or pass key, to the mystery is withheld, and we seek steadfastly and untiringly for that. When we fail to find it the unknown conjurer escapes us—perhaps to play his trick again. Sometimes we only catch him the second or third time. I am, however, far from feeling that I shall fail to find both the trick and the trick-ter in this case.'

'Do you anticipate a long inquiry?'

'I do not. I am disposed to believe I may be successful inside a week or ten days. But if I fail within that time I shall probably fail altogether.'

The detective took his leave and presently lunched alone. A chance spectator would have

marked upon his face neither perturbation nor anxiety. Amusement at private thoughts and a hearty appetite were the natural indications of a mind at peace. Presently he visited the cathedral and listened to the anthem.

Vincent Maydew was gone to London that he might see after the funeral arrangements of his uncle, while two days later the burial of Mary Maydew would take place. But Ringrose found plenty to occupy him on returning that night to Greystone. Indeed, the case forced itself upon his attention, for he found Juanita Forrester anxious to have some conversation while her sweetheart was absent, and William Jay had also something remarkable to communicate.

At tea-time the girl invited John to take his meal with her and when they were alone she explained her care.

'I saw Vincent off this morning,' she told him. 'After you had gone to Exeter he started on his motor bicycle to ride up by road the way he best likes over Salisbury Plain. But I am a good deal bothered, Mr. Ringrose. He is taking this dreadful affair in a manner I cannot at all understand. One knows that he must be harrowed and shaken—such a sensitive being as he is—but, as I tried to point out to him, he had no power to prevent the tragedy, and he certainly did not precipitate it in any way. After all, for him, dear fellow, there are very obvious compensations. I daren't tell him so, of course; he'd think it a flippant, cruel, and heartless attitude. Perhaps it is. But when you consider how bitterly Miss Maydew attacked him and how actively she tried to prevent him from enjoying

what should have been lawfully his in the future—then I, for one, cannot feel very overwhelmed with grief before his wonderful escape. It would be humbug if I pretended that it was. Yet Vincent is overwhelmed. The crime has had a most extraordinary effect upon him, and I was more conscious of it than ever this morning.'

'How so, Miss Forrester?'

'There's something happened to him. It's almost as if his character was changed. He's aloof, abstracted. He stares through you rather than at you. He's not cold exactly—not really changed to me, but changed in himself: and the change does involve a different attitude, even to me. And a change of that sort can only have been produced by some tremendous shock. I know him so well and feel sure of it.'

'He said nothing definite?'

'No, he hasn't mentioned his aunt's death to me since the inquest. But the situation now existing, which might have been expected to challenge all his powers of concentration and energy, leaves him apparently indifferent. He wants to get away. He actually spoke as though he might not return to his aunt's funeral! There was something almost reckless in his talk. He said that perhaps he should break his neck on Salisbury Plain and snuff out the last of the family. I was rather shocked, but he spoke as though it might be the best thing that could happen for everybody. Have you known a tragedy like this actually unsent a man's reason?'

'Never, Miss Forrester. There must be something here you don't understand.'

'Have you observed anything strange?'

'Since you ask me, I can honestly say that I have. There are undoubtedly reasons for Mr. Maydew's profound preoccupation. He has confided in me up to a point, and be sure I shall respect his confidence. I have, I believe, already set his mind at rest in sundry particulars.'

'If you discover the murderer it might go far to calm him,' she answered. 'I know one thing: that he is tremendously concerned to get to the bottom of poor Miss Maydew's death.'

'We must not give up hope yet. Be sure I shall spare no pains to solve the problem, though it certainly looks difficult still.'

She changed the subject suddenly.

'I noticed a curious thing in my bedroom cupboard to-day,' she said. 'I was turning out some dresses to find one I'm going to dye black, and I noticed on the floor of the cupboard a streak of white wood. A splinter, some inches long, must have been torn from the floor of the cupboard. Now I felt positive that was something new, because it impressed my mind as strange. So I examined it, and I found a floorboard of the cupboard quite loose. It had been loosened, so that it was easily lifted. I lifted it and found a hole underneath—an empty hole. It seems to mean nothing, but it must have been done by somebody, for some purpose, and I thought I'd mention it. Did you do it yourself, perhaps, when you were examining my bedroom?'

'No,' he answered, 'I did not do it; but I have already found what you describe. A receptacle was made there by pulling up a short board, and in the operation a splinter broke from the old deal and

left a conspicuous streak of new wood. Beneath, as you say, is a receptacle.'

'Made on purpose?'

'No. The hole beneath was natural.'

'Did you find anything in it, Mr. Ringrose?'

'Nothing that appears to be very interesting. Only a few inches of pink tape.'

'How extraordinary! Might I see them?'

John complied at once, and, taking his pocket-book from his breast, soon placed the tape in Juanita's hands.

She could make nothing of it, however.

'It's old and grubby,' she said. 'It might have been there a hundred years, I should think.'

'Yes, it well might. Yet somehow I associate it with the case.'

'How extraordinary, Mr. Ringrose. In what way?'

'Indirectly; but the fact is too isolated as yet to be of immediate value. A case, Miss Forrester, is often like an American Cross Word Puzzle. Thick darkness hangs over one light, and, cudgel your brains as you will, you cannot trace any correspondence between the given definition and the wanted word. But presently, as other words are guessed and fitted into their places—behold! without any effort on your part, the wanted word suddenly appears. You have written it without guessing it at all. And so, perhaps, with this shabby fragment of pink tape. It may mean nothing and lie outside the problem altogether, but it may mean something quite important. Obviously an attempt has been made to create a hiding-place in your dress cupboard. But for the splinter we should not have per-

ceived it. The splinter is very curious. I would give a great deal to find that splinter.'

'I never thought to look for it,' she said.

'You wouldn't, but I did—without success. To return to Mr. Maydew. If I may advise, do not let any strangeness that he may reveal alter your attitude to him. Treat him as usual. He is, as you say, an amazingly sensitive man, an artist, and his nerves are abnormally developed probably. You can best help him by ignoring any oddity of manner or wildness of speech. Time will restore his balance. Meanwhile, don't mention this subject—the cupboard—to him, or anybody. Be sure to remember that.'

Juanita thanked the detective, and, true to herself, strove to show him that she sympathized with his own difficulties and had imagination to realize the painful nature of his work in life. She was gracious and kindly, and in a man himself gracious and kindly her attitude found ready appreciation and response. Already he shared the accepted opinion of Miss Forrester, and when he had left her he might have been expected to balance her sweet nature against the dark secret overhanging the soul of the man she loved, and mourn for both. But no gravity darkened John Ringrose as he sat presently in the kitchen with Mrs Jay and the cook, smoked a pipe and listened to their theories of the crime. Jane Woodhouse was indifferent, but the elder woman suffered from reaction.

'You miss her, though she was hard and a driver,' confessed Ann. 'I told Mr. Maydew so this morning, and he understood, same as he understands everything. "Yes," he said, "you'll miss her, Ann,

same as the old convicts they kept in chains missed the irons when they were struck off."'

'A very good simile, ma'am, no doubt,' answered John.

Then he heard that William desired to speak with him, and when he had smoked his pipe he joined the butler, who was cleaning plate in his pantry.

John found Mr. Jay full of a curious little discovery. 'It may be nought,' he said, 'or it may mean a lot. We people are not in a position to tell what's useful and what's useless; you are. It's like this. Have you cast your eyes round the library, Mr. Ringrose?'

'Yes, William. I've had a pretty good look round everything in there.'

'You would. And you noticed a pretty knife or two in the show-cases, I expect?'

'I took special note of them. There are two Scottish dirks, and there are other daggers from the East. They interested me above a bit, and you'll understand why. I've satisfied myself, with the doctor's assurance, that pretty well any one of those knives might have done the deed.'

'Ah! Trust you! And it's about one of the knives -a Scottish dirk, sir—that I wanted to speak. No doubt you see things about 'em that's hid from me, but I see one thing about one of them that's hid from you.'

'Good, William! What is it?'

'Just this. I don't say I'm very well up in the collection, or anything like that. Miss Maydew cared not a button for books or curiosities; but she cared for cleanliness, and it was my job once a

month to run over that room, dust the backs of the books, and polish the glass of the show-cases. So I got to know roughly what was in them—the cases, not the books. And I happened to be familiar with the middle case, because the cream of my late master's collection was in it. That Scot's dirk—and I'll take my oath of it—was fastened to its card with a piece of pink tape. 'The Prince Charlie' dirk, Mr. Ringrose. There 's no manner of doubt about that. I wouldn't say anybody in this house can substantiate the statement, but I'm prepared to swear to it.'

'What of it, William?'

'This: that since the murder, the dirk is fastened to its card with a bit of common book twine, uncoloured. That dirk has been out of the case unknown to me, and now it 's back; but the pink tape 's gone, and a piece of ordinary string has taken its place.'

Ringrose showed deep interest.

'That most certainly means something,' he said. 'Show me the dirk. Can you describe the former pink tape exactly?'

'You can see the like in the case,' answered the old man. 'There 's a lot of curios tied to their cards with similar stuff.'

Mr. Jay lighted a lamp and groaned while doing so.

'I've hurt my arm,' he explained, 'and got a boil forming on it that gives me pain.'

'How did you do that?' asked John, for it was his curious custom to let no statement of any sort or kind go unquestioned, when it came from an interesting person.

'Couldn't tell you more than the dead. I felt

pain there a fortnight ago—woke with it, but saw nought but a flea-bite as it seemed. Then it got worse, and my wife's poulticing it.'

'Don't let it get worse. A bite's often poisonous. Let your doctor see it.'

'I reckon I will,' answered Mr. Jay; then Ringrose took the lamp from him and they repaired to the library. The case was soon open and the dirk in the detective's hand. He took it by the blade, then studied the pink tape on other specimens.

'You can form no idea where this string came from?' he asked, but William was unable to say.

'There's nothing distinct to my eye about it,' he replied.

'If I remove it, will it be missed?' inquired John.

'Not a chance. Nobody ever looks in these cases.'

'There may be finger-prints,' exclaimed Ringrose. 'That's why I avoid the handle. Thank you, William. Now we'd better separate. I'll look after this knife for the present. Don't mention the subject to anybody.'

They parted and the visitor retired to his room, not again appearing until, at Miss Forrester's wish, he dined with her. William waited upon them, but the conversation was turned to the future and devoted to general subjects. Juanita showed concern for the butler's hurt, of which she knew, and repeated John's advice. Indeed, she urged him to delay no longer, and when the meal was ended, Mr. Jay presently donned a thick coat and left the house.

On the following morning he reported that Dr. Forbes had lanced his arm, and that he felt much better in consequence.

In the course of that day Vincent Maydew returned home and, during the evening, he and the detective very vitally advanced their private understanding. But the course of the conversation was little to have been expected.

At dinner, John announced his attention of soon leaving Greystone, and when the meal was ended, the two men departed to the little study as before. Juanita went with them. She remained but half an hour, then retired, and as she kissed her sweetheart and bade him 'good-night,' the watcher observed a shadow deepen on the man's face and understood it. Miss Forrester was also conscious of the darkness that still held Vincent Maydew; indeed, she voiced it as she shook John's hand.

'Cheer him up if you can, Mr. Ringrose, for I am powerless to do so,' she said, and the elder smiled upon her, while Vincent stared.

'I will make a great effort,' promised John, and then, the girl gone, he shut the door he had opened for her and returned to his armchair.

'Mend the fire,' he said; 'you're in for a pretty long sitting, my friend.'

He lighted his cigar and then regarded the melancholy youth before him with an expression in which amusement and deep sympathy were blended.

Maydew spoke first and blurted a piece of information. 'That knife's gone out of the museum,' he said. 'For some infernal reason I was prompted to look at it again to-night before dinner. I went for a book to the library—or said I did—and turning to look at the darned thing, discovered that it had been taken off the card.'

Ringrose nodded.

'I took it,' he answered.

'Why?'

'I want it. I want to keep it, that I may add it to an interesting little private collection. You'll say you've given me enough, no doubt.'

He tapped his breast.

'Twenty thousand pounds sounds good, Mr. Maydew. But I want Prince Charlie's dirk, too, and I guess you'll have no further use for it.'

The other flinched before humour he felt intolerable.

'Keep it,' he answered, 'and leave us as soon as you reasonably can.'

'Thank you. That's my intention. But there are vital points to clear to-night.'

'You mean the money? Well, in a few months, or possibly less, I will hand you bearer bonds for the full amount.'

'Excellent! But there's another interesting little complication I've got to break to you. I think I know who really murdered Miss Maydew.'

Agony convulsed John's hearer. Vincent glared and for a moment could not speak; but the other was quick to spare him all needless torture. He rose, poured a stiff whisky, added but a splash of soda from a siphon, and took command.

'Drink and listen. It was not Miss Forrester. She is as innocent as yourself, my friend.'

The sufferer stiffened and grew deadly pale; his eyes rolled up and he was about to faint; but relief took another turn. He had already drunk at the other's command. Now he relaxed; his heart leapt and he burst into tears. John, knowing that all was well, patted his shoulder, spoke comforting words,

then left Maydew to recover. Indeed, he was moved himself, and though his eyes twinkled, they were dim. Silence fell on them; as Maydew regained self-control and looked longingly at the door, his visitor spoke.

'Yes, I know what you want to do, young fellow. You want to bolt to her and throw yourself on your knees at her feet, and ask her forgiveness, and tell her you're the most unworthy dog that ever loved a rare girl who was too good for him. But that's a scene you must play in your own heart and nowhere on this earth. Now listen to me. Sit still, light a cigarette, or something, and believe you're out of the wood. You've got to heed me, and then I've got to heed you; and then you may be allowed to go to bed. As for Miss Forrester, she has had a good deal to endure lately and has stood under a pretty dark shadow, though, thank Heaven, her blessed innocence never allowed her to feel the cloud. Anybody else might have wondered at your misery, and for that matter she did; but she little guessed the reason and she never must—remember that. However, we'll come to her. Now I start.'

John put down his cigar and perceived his listener was collected and in a condition to follow the argument with a mind at rest.

'When you told me that you had killed Miss Maydew,' he began, 'you told me a great deal more than the fact. Utterly ignorant as you probably are of criminal psychology—like most of the other writing chaps who invent murder stories—you overlooked certain very obvious indications of your own character which you had already presented to me. I'd studied you very carefully long before your con-

fession. You will never commit a murder, Mr. Maydew. You can take it from me your talents will never rise to that. William was perfectly right when he told me you would find it hard to kill a wasp, let alone an old woman. Moreover, you are highly intelligent—an intellectual man—the last who would be likely to let any futile passion for revenge obscure your outlook, or run you into a capital crime. A Sclav or Latin 'intellectual' might; not an Anglo-Saxon. Our 'high-brows' are a meek and mild crew, except with the pen.

'Beyond that you are naturally honest. You lied badly, obviously, absurdly. Had you been already under my suspicion as the probable murderer of Miss Maydew, I should have let you out after your confession. But, of course, a great deal more than evidence of your own innocence accompanied your statement. I knew in two minutes that you never killed your aunt; but somebody had certainly done so, and what did you do? You made it exceedingly clear that you knew, or thought you knew, the culprit!

'What followed? Your terror was laid bare under my eyes and your suspicion appeared. There only existed one person in the world for you who would create such confusion. For none else on God's earth would you have been prepared to take on your shoulders a crime of this magnitude, or confess it to me. Love blinds in more ways than one. It actually blinded you in the vital particular of your sweetheart's innocence; and that, of course, proved that evidence of the most terrific character confronted you. Only such evidence could have forced you to your conviction against years of devo-

tion and experience and love. You'll tell me about that presently. A secret between us for ever, remember; but a secret that it will be essential I should know for the satisfaction of the law.

'The evidence that convinced your reason against your heart must have been prodigious, for it conquered reality, as doubtless it was meant to do. You know Juanita Forrester better than anybody else in the world. You shared the common knowledge of her extraordinary distinction -her rare warm heart—her generosity—her sympathy with all who were unhappy or downtrodden. I've heard it echoed on every side, from the bailiff to the boot-boy. And beyond that, you knew her inner soul and had won her confidence and worship. From you nothing was hidden; yet where the rest of the world scorned the possibility of evil breathed in connexion with her name, you found yourself convinced that she was a murderess! That 's interesting and shows how, as I said just now, love blinds in more ways than one. It 's because love, like conscience, makes us cowards, Mr. Maydew.'

He paused for a moment, but lifted his hand for silence when the other was about to speak.

'Listen a little longer. We've nearly done with the first act,' continued John. 'Well, I knew, while you told your story, that you were innocent, but believed your sweetheart guilty. I felt tempted then and there to undeceive you, so far as your attempt to delude me was concerned: but business is business and I saw, of course, that the truth might be as your secret terror prompted you to fear. I could not feel positive that you were mistaken; and so I fell in with your transparent little plot, named my

price, and took your money. It was understood that I should pretend to work and presently throw up the sponge and retire beaten. The interesting and original thing is that I might actually have retired beaten had it not been for your efforts to choke me off! They were, of course, full of invaluable information.

'I obeyed you, save in one particular. Instead of pretending to work, I did work, and my work swiftly convinced me that your fears were folly. I longed to tell you, boy. The hardest thing in the case was to keep my mouth shut to you and let you go on thinking that the girl you loved was a murderess even for one hour. But I'll be frank. I couldn't trust you. It was better you wilted a little longer and left her wondering. Because, you see, your Juanita was safe enough. She puzzled and she troubled, but nothing to hurt; while somebody else, who mattered a great deal more than either of you, had to receive my respectful consideration; and that was the doer of the deed. One didn't want to create any uneasiness in that quarter.'

'Good heavens! You knew?'

'No; I guessed; but I didn't know. But after I'd seen Mr. Fosdike, the lawyer, I began to feel tolerably sure. Now hear what you can do to help me.'

'How should I help? I wish I could.'

'Tell me exactly what made you so terribly sure that your sweetheart, and nobody else, had killed Miss Maydew. I attach the very greatest importance to this information, so take your time and give me every detail.'

Vincent Maydew collected his thoughts and then spoke. 'I come out of this darned badly,' he began.

'Not so badly as you tried to, however.'

'The facts are these. After my Aunt Mary declared her intentions against me, Juanita and I sat tight for a day or two and hoped that she would change her mind, grow calmer and allow reason to work with her. However, she never changed her mind, and reason was not her strong suit at any time. She sent for Fosdike and told us, on the night of her death, that she had made a new will and left everything to her brother. When she had gone to bed and before I went upstairs to pack before an early start on the following day, Juanita for once in her life was really angry. She cut loose and cried out that the old woman was a monster and dead to every decent human feeling. Her abstract sense of justice prompted her, rather than her indignation for me, or her own personal disappointment. She railed against Miss Maydew and declared that she would leave her instantly and never see her again. She had actually planned to leave the house on the following morning with me, and she thought me rather mean for pleading against such a natural action. We differed, but we didn't quarrel. I looked ahead and still hoped that a thing done in anger might be cancelled presently, if neither of us took any hasty step to make a change of front impossible. Juanita at last allowed me to persuade her. She consented to stop, at least for a time, and await events. Then she went to bed.'

'One moment. When you speak of a "personal disappointment" for Miss Forrester, you mean that, under the old will, she enjoyed a considerable bequest, while the new will contained no mention of her?'

'Yes; at dinner, when she told us what she had done, my aunt specially mentioned to Juanita that she had withdrawn her promised legacy. The amount I do not know, neither did Juanita, but she had reason to believe it handsome.'

'It was ten thousand pounds,' said Mr. Ringrose.

'Was it? Well, I'm probably wrong when I speak of "personal disappointment," for my girl certainly did not think of herself that night. She only thought of justice and the wicked wrong to me after long years of steadfast support to my aunt, and my patience and consideration and so on. I had really tried to win the old woman, and had studied her pleasure in a thousand ways. They say every artist has a good slice of feminine make-up in him, and, at any rate, I thought I understood Aunt Mary and could sympathize with her difficulties of character and see the best side of her. When the smash came Juanita remembered these things, and they made her furious on my account. She went to bed angry—honestly angry—and my mind was left acutely conscious of such an extraordinary fact. Her Spanish blood, no doubt, and her intense love for justice.

'The next thing is this. She went to bed and so did I; but I couldn't sleep. I was terribly upset by the disaster of the day, and tossed and turned and troubled hour after hour, and cudgelled my wits in vain to find some rational and intelligent way of saving the situation. Somewhere about two o'clock I thought I heard a noise in the passage, rose and looked out—just in time to see Juanita enter her room, carrying a candle in one hand and something else in the other I could not make out. I

guessed that, like myself, she was sleepless, and I felt inclined to go and see her. I wish that I had done so. It might have saved me many appalling hours. But I did not, and I had forgotten the incident entirely before the shock of the morning's tragedy until she mentioned it to me many hours later.

'Then she told me exactly what she told the coroner at the inquest—how she had gone to get a book and something to eat and drink; and how she thought a sound came from the corridor near Miss Maydew's door. She had been strange during the hours after the discovery—or so it seemed to me. A calmness and indifference that appeared foreign to her as I understood her followed the evil news. She showed no great sorrow and hardly any surprise. But there was something I felt almost as though she found herself under the weight of a dread akin to my own—as though, perhaps, the horrible thought crossed her mind that I might be responsible! At any rate, she avoided me—doubtless in reality from a delicate feeling that I might prefer to be alone at such a time—but I was unbalanced and full of vague fears.

'Thus when opportunity came something inspired me to go into Juanita's room, when she was out of the house, and make such an examination as would doubtless presently be made by the law. I did so and found nothing to cause uneasiness until I came to the cupboard. There I found evidence of something—a splinter broken off old wood—a sort of thing to catch the eye, Ringrose. Closer search showed that a board had been displaced, and I found no difficulty in lifting it—an old,

solid plank not more than three feet long. Underneath it was some white, thin material huddled up in a ball. I pulled this out, and as I did so Prince Charlie's dirk fell out of it. The thing was obviously one of Juanita's nightgowns, and the right wrist was soaked in blood.

'At that moment my mind moved queerly. It seemed that the truth was a thing of the past—that I had known for an eternity how my aunt died. I was only concerned with Juanita, and I sat on the ground and stared at the blood-stained knife and nightgown and explained to myself that my sweetheart had suffered an awful fit of temporary insanity, had done this thing and hidden the evidence, then probably forgotten all about it. I wove a theory and my mind moved as quickly as our minds move in dreams. I passed through vast arguments all tending in one direction, and after what seemed a lapse of hours I woke, as it were, wondering that nobody had come to find me. As a matter of fact, no more than five minutes had passed since I made the discovery. I restored the board to its place and took the evidence of the tragedy to my own room. And that night, when alone in this study after the household had retired, I burned the nightdress, destroying every fragment of it, and I locked up the dirk in my private desk.

'By now I had proved conclusively to myself that the deed must have been prompted by some strange freak of atavism in Juanita—an impulse awakened by my wrongs—not her own. I suspected that, in a sort of waking trance, she had done a deed which her maternal ancestors might have

condoned, or themselves committed readily enough. She had remembered the museum and obtained the knife. I guessed that I had seen her returning with it, and that at a later hour she had unconsciously committed the crime, concealed the evidence, slept and awakened to suppose she had dreamed the deed—if, indeed, it remained in her memory at all. You can see how my devotion quickened my mind to explain what seemed so terribly certain.

'So it stood next day, and contact with Juanita convinced me that she knew nothing of the horrible event. To tell her what I knew was unthinkable, for she would have insisted on making the facts public. I resolved to be dumb, therefore; but I delayed too long in a very vital particular. My first action should have been to cleanse the knife and return it to the place from which I knew it had come. This I intended to do, but two things happened on the following morning. The post brought the news that Uncle John was dead, and I guessed at once this fact destroyed the new will; then, early after breakfast, Inspector Burrows arrived and asked me if I would meet your train and invite you to stop at Greystone. He held that desirable and, though a detective in the house was the very last thing I desired, I dared not say so without rousing suspicions in the policeman's mind.

'No opportunity to visit the library secretly occurred until the time had come to go to the station. I went on my motor bicycle, met you, and invited you to Greystone. I didn't think you were coming. I meant, however, to get the knife back, and that night determined to secure the card from

the museum so that nothing should appear to be missing. I had meant to go after everybody was asleep in the small hours, and judged that to move the card would be as safe as to return the knife. But on going to bed I slept like the dead and didn't wake up till the first glimmer of dawn. I started at once for the card, but it was too late. You were actually in the museum, and unseen by you, from the gallery, I observed you at the centre case and saw you read the empty card. Then I cleared out, leaving you unaware that I'd seen your action.'

Ringrose nodded.

'I can pretty well guess the rest,' he said.

'Nobody will ever guess what the next twenty-four hours meant to me,' replied the young man. 'I suffered the torments of hell, for I knew, as surely as I was alive, that you would get to the bottom of it with such a clue. You somehow inspired me with an infernal certainty that Juanita was doomed sooner or later. Not reason, but terror, for you had no real clue. But my nerve was gone, and at last I determined upon taking the blame and cutting the ground from under your feet by confessing to the murder myself. It seemed a safe way out for her, and I didn't appreciate how mad it was likely to look from your point of view. You didn't give me a chance to appreciate it, for that matter. You deceived me into thinking that I had deceived you.'

'What we call a double-cross, Mr. Maydew.'

'Nothing matters now,' replied the younger; 'but I thought I'd got you, and that the money had done the trick. I ought to apologize, I suppose, but by Heaven! you've earned the money all right in your own way.'

The elder smiled.

'Now it's my turn,' he said. 'I haven't much imagination maybe, yet quite enough to see how this looked to you and what a cleft stick you found yourself in. You argued very well, and being a literary man with a poetic turn of mind, you did pretty much what one might have expected. But you're no actor, Mr. Maydew, and as I've told you, your own yarn stultified itself. I knew what you were after, and that reduced the problem. You thought your sweetheart had done the deed—that was clear. The next thing for me to do was to find out if you were right. I found out you were wrong. That's where intuition came in. A dangerous thing intuition—if you use it to fight against reason, as so many clever people often do—but a mighty useful gift in its place.

'The problem was to find out whether any motive existed for the murder of Miss Maydew in her companion's mind. Did Miss Forrester gain by it? If you and she had heard of John Maydew's death before the murder, then one saw at once that a good deal was gained. But neither of you had heard. Therefore, to kill her mistress was to lose any future chance of changing the situation for the better. Such an act could only be performed by a certain type of character. It argued a tempest of uncontrolled passion and a lust for immediate revenge at any cost. Nothing more unlikely to overtake Miss Forrester seemed possible. Her attitude to the affair was quite in keeping with the situation. She pretended nothing she did not feel. She continued to be herself. Her only cause for distraction, apart from the natural horror of such an event, was your

behaviour. She knew you so well, and she could not understand the way you took it, especially after you learned the will was inoperative owing to your uncle having died before it was made. That puzzled her very much and she told me so. Then she discovered the loose board in her dress cupboard and showed it to me. I, of course, had seen it for myself long before, and showed her the piece of tape I had taken from it—the tape from the card in the museum as it turned out. That you had overlooked with the other more terrible clues in your hand.

'I was quite sure that she knew nothing whatever. She's the sort of girl whose native quality looks out of her wonderful eyes. To kill an old woman for revenge was absolutely beyond her power, even if she'd been born a Borgia. What followed? Why, that somebody unknown had been at amazing pains to plant the crime on Miss Juanita. I guessed at once where you had probably found the knife. But what had led you to search for it, or imagine she was involved, I did not know until you told me.

'The knife, then, was put there—to be found not by you, but by those who would presently search Greystone; and the splinter was deliberately torn off the board to challenge attention. Without that accident, the floor of the cupboard would not have arrested any eye.

'So I found the fun really beginning, from my point of view. And there, if you please, I'll stop to-night. The first act 's ended. To-morrow will see the second act played, and you have told me important things that should help in certain rather

vital particulars. I must fit your information into its place and see whether it supports my present theory, or if at any point it upsets it. I hope not, and I think not. Meantime, be at rest and feel neither shame for your falsehoods nor fear for the future. I may be right, or I may be entirely mistaken; but after the funeral to-morrow it is quite possible, with a pinch of luck, that the second and third acts can both be played.'

Ringrose shook the lover's hand, and with many expressions of gratitude and thanksgiving, Vincent Maydew bade him good-night.

The following day brought the funeral of Miss Maydew, and large numbers, attracted by curiosity rather than esteem, crowded the little country churchyard. For human beings will go far and take no little pains to look at the outside of a coffin wherein lies a murdered man or woman.

Vincent and Juanita attended the ceremony, while the whole of the Greystone staff were also present. Inspector Burrows and his constables found enough to do to regulate the traffic and preserve decency; Ringrose availed himself of a house practically empty to pursue certain investigations inspired by young Maydew's last statement and his own deductions upon it.

For more than an hour Greystone was deserted, save for a caretaker in the kitchen and John himself. He had purposely offered to remain, and promised Maydew to watch the front of the premises while they should be empty. His purpose, however, demanded absolute secrecy, and, to ensure it, he entered the kitchen five minutes after the coach had left the front door, and bade the under-gar-

dener, left in charge, to convey a telegram for him to the post office. The young man raised no demur, since it was understood that Ringrose now ruled. Glad enough to leave the deserted mansion, the youth set out, and was gone three parts of an hour.

And on the return of the little funeral party, Ringrose left the house for Twambley and enjoyed a long interview with Inspector Burrows.

He returned in the afternoon and sought the society of Vincent and Juanita, after chatting with the servants and hearing from them all particulars of the funeral and the sightseers.

All the staff appeared cheerful. Indeed, the very house seemed to have gained a new and more exhilarating atmosphere with the departure of its defunct mistress. Again the trio took their dinner together, and the meal, despite the melancholy business of that day, showed Vincent Maydew in a happier mood.

He alluded to the affairs of his uncle, not mentioned until then. John Maydew had died somewhat suddenly of physical mischief resulting from intemperance. His death had not surprised his physician, and his affairs presented no complication save a body of debt, which his nephew had made immediate arrangements to cancel. Two days later would see his funeral, and young Maydew proposed to attend it.

Later in the evening John and his host took their way to the little study, and the detective, after half an hour in the united company of the lovers, begged Juanita to retire.

'I don't like to separate you,' he said, 'but I'm

off to-morrow morning, and I must have a serious talk with Mr. Maydew to-night. You go to bed, Miss Forrester, and go to sleep.'

Juanita kissed Vincent, and he opened the door for her. Then he returned and expressed regret that his guest was about to depart so soon.

'Your theory has broken down, I suppose,' he said. 'I hated the sight of you till yesterday, Ringrose, but now I love the sight of you, and I want you to promise to be my friend.'

'A promise I'll make and keep,' replied the other heartily enough. 'But I've not gone yet, and my theory has not broken down, and several rather startling things are going to happen before I'm off to-morrow. You're in for another bad night. However, there's no escape from that.'

He looked at his watch.

'Dr. Forbes will be here in ten minutes or so; but we'll get on from where we left off yesterday. A lot has happened to me since then.'

'Dr. Forbes? Why have you sent for him?' asked the other.

'Because, unless I miss my guess, somebody's going to want him badly before very long.'

'Not Juanita?'

'No, no! I hope Miss Forrester will sleep soundly and not wake up till to-morrow morning. And I think she will. You've taken a tidy lot off her mind by coming back to your old cheerful self. Now follow me as closely as you can. Last night we had only finished with you and your sweetheart, but there were three persons open to suspicion in the house besides yourself and Miss Forrester. And all three, by the way, had spoken to me

with the warmest affection and regard for her. Well, what about these three old servants associated with Greystone for a great many years? I put it to myself this way. There had been a big thing happen in the house, and William, waiting at table and enjoying the confidence of all concerned, knew all about the row and the consequence. Through him, his wife, and Jane, the cook, would also know about it. He'd heard of the quarrel and knew it was a grim reality, for he'd been one of the witnesses to the new will.

'I had a chat with him on that subject and found him, though full of talk about every other matter, reticent as to that. He'd known what was in the will, because his mistress had told him; but he'd not, of course, read the will when he attested Miss Maydew's signature. Asked by me whether Miss Forrester was interested in the new will, he replied that he had no idea. All he could say was that Miss Maydew had disinherited you.

'I'd already intended to see Mr. Fosdike and study both the old will and the new, and I did so two days ago and found out an exceedingly interesting fact. You had told me that Miss Forrester was remembered in the earlier will, and I informed you of the amount last night. She was to have had ten thousand pounds, and there were other legacies under the first will. Among them----'

Ringrose was interrupted, for William opened the door and announced Dr. Forbes. The physician entered, beat some snow off his overcoat, and demanded to know the purpose of the message that brought him; but he was not immediately answered. Maydew bade William fetch spirits and

syphons, and when he had done so and withdrawn, both men turned to the detective.

'It's like this, doctor,' explained John. 'A weak heart is a weak heart, and there's a weak heart beating in the breast of somebody in this house to-night. That same heart is going to get a very ugly shock at exactly ten-thirty. That's within half an hour from the present time. The shock will be severe and I'm a merciful sort of man, so I judged you would be better on the spot, and left the note for you accordingly. Now let me finish what I was saying to Mr. Maydew, please. You brought your bag, I see.'

'I did, Ringrose,' replied Forbes.

'Thank you. I was telling Mr. Maydew about his aunt's former will. She'd remembered one or two old people in it at the direction of her late father; and some of these had already received their bequests and were eliminated by codicil. But four legatees remained, including Miss Forrester, while in the new will all four had been omitted. The point of interest was, first, the size of the legacies, secondly, the fact that the legatees must know their money had gone. William and his wife, Ann, were down for five thousand pounds jointly; Mrs. Woodhouse, the cook, got one thousand.'

'How do you know that they knew they were out?' asked Maydew.

'For the best of reasons. William was brought in to witness the testator's signature. He knew that he and his wife were in the old will for five thousand, for he told Miss Forrester so long ago, but now he knew that since he witnessed her will, he could be no longer in it. Moreover it was so exceed-

ingly short that he might have read it if it wasn't actually covered when he signed. And Fouldes says it was not, and I doubt not he read every word.

'Now what might a facer like that have done for William? He was a self controlled man before his betters, but I found that, behind the scenes, he had a devil of a temper and ruled with a rod of iron. His heart 's proggy, and it was understood as a sort of unwritten law by his wife and Jane that he must never be crossed. Even with me he had some ado, when I bothered him, to be civil. There is temper in his eyes. I began to see light. Things happened — and, as I looked at the growing theory, it developed.

'In a case of this sort the detective, if he 's wise, will attempt to get into the skin of the suspected person and consider the situation from his point of view. Here was William quietly going on with his life, but, assuming he'd had a hand in the affair, how was he thinking and feeling? Well, obviously he must have been the most puzzled man on God's earth. For how did things look to him? He'd been devilish careful to say nothing but what was true touching Miss Forrester. He'd absolved her and his new master, he'd also whitewashed his wife and the cook, and, of course, himself, in a logical and reasonable fashion. But assuming, for argument's sake, that, in a sudden fury to be revenged on her, he'd killed the old woman, who'd robbed him of his legacy at a stroke, then what had he done afterwards?

'What he had apparently done was to plant the weapon and other evidence in Miss Forrester's bed

room at the first opportunity following the crime. That argued careful preparation. He had to make that cubby hole in the cupboard, and he had to be free to do it. Nothing was easier. He could have spent an hour in her bedroom any day, when she was out and his wife and Jane down below. That William did; but whether he got a nightdress actually prepared before the murder or after, we don't know yet. I think after. At any rate, the point is that, in that disordered house on the morning after the murder, he had fifty opportunities to slip into Miss Forrester's room and plant the clues. And here's a side question for you, doctor. What's wrong with Mr. Jay at this moment?'

'He's got a large tumour on his left forearm.'

'Could you say what produced it?'

'Impossible now—poison of some sort.'

'A good, deep cut might have done it?'

'Yes, if the wound had suppurated.'

'Then I'll go on.

'Now I'm William,' continued Ringrose. 'I've killed Miss Maydew and worked off the incriminating evidence where it can't well be missed by the police, though it will look as if it had been carefully hidden, of course. And what next? I—as William—find first that my manufactured evidence has been apparently overlooked by the professional detective altogether; and then I find it's gone! I am now in a quandary. But light is presently thrown on my darkness. I find the dirk back in the museum. That proves to my mind that John Ringrose did not discover it, but somebody else did. That must leave William horribly mystified; but, of course, he's powerless and daren't pre-

tend he knows anything. He was quite clever about it, however, and called my attention to Prince Charlie's dirk and the new piece of string; but that was all he could do. Since then, no doubt, he's been living in hope that I was on a wrong tack. And he's very glad I've failed and am leaving to-morrow.'

Vincent Maydew stared.

'Jay!' he cried.

'Yes. An ingenious man, but a ferocious temper was always simmering under that restrained exterior, and Fate unfortunately liberated it. He probably killed the old woman for revenge—perhaps told her so before he struck; but the plot to involve Miss Forrester, shows far more than mere passion and hate under a cruel disappointment. He's a bad old devil under his skin. I'll forgive anybody who forfeits his life for the luxury of a murder; but it's hard to forgive one who played the game as William played it and then wanted to have his cake and eat it, too, at an innocent woman's expense.

'The nightdress solved the problem, Mr. Maydew. You see what it told me? Perhaps not; but it was this. William had got the hiding-place in Miss Forrester's bedroom ready before he wanted it, no doubt. But what was going into it? The dirk, of course, and the bit of tape. But with the actual murder came another inspiration. The nightdress. And why? In my mind's eye I saw Mr Jay commit the crime. It was a short business. He'd slip out of his bed, do the deed and be back under five minutes. But what happened? The blood. He found his pyjama jacket sleeve red.

That gave him the inspiration. So, when you told me of the nightdress and the red, right sleeve, I thought of William's pyjamas. They might have gone the way of the nightdress and be burned, or they might not. I happened to remember they were not. When you were at the funeral and the house was empty, I looked for them—where? Not in William's bedroom, but in his wife's work-basket. I'd seen her mending a pyjama jacket, you see. William had met with an accident and burned the right sleeve—so she explained and so no doubt he told her. But, after the nightdress story, I knew that he'd cut away the right sleeve and burned the edge of the cut. It fitted in. He's wearing the pyjama jacket again—with the right sleeve mended.

'And one more sweet touch. I found the splinter! I found it in William's morning jacket. But not in the pocket. He'd put it in the breast pocket when he broke the board, and been much surprised, no doubt, to find it gone later when he came to destroy it. And why did he find it gone? Because it had dropped through a hole in the lining and was at the bottom edge of the coat safe and sound. He'd put on his best for the funeral, and his coat was hanging on a peg behind his bedroom door. Feeling the lower pocket, I touched something hard in the lining, and in half a minute the splinter was in my hand. Things will slip down from a worn pocket like that. I've known it happen to myself.

'So there you are. He killed her for revenge, because she'd forgotten the legacy and ruled him out; though Mr. Fosdike thinks she quite meant to put

him and his wife and Jane back afterwards; and he plotted to land Miss Forrester when the deed was done. It's a clever murder enough in its little way, and he had some good touches. The most masterly thing he did was to praise Miss Forrester so heartily. The temptation to drop a word of doubt in my ear must have been considerable, but he withstood it. And now Burrows and the constable ought to be at the back door.'

As Vincent explained these things for the benefit of a bewildered doctor, there came a muffled scream in the passage and the men rose. A moment later Jane Woodhouse rushed into the room.

'The police!' she cried. 'Mr. Burrows and my brother-in-law have just come in and arrested William for the murder, and he's fallen lumpus in a faint, and Ann's going mad!'

'Your bag, doctor,' suggested John, and a moment later all hastened to the kitchen.

They found the police striving to restore William Jay, only to hear from Dr. Forbes that the little man had passed beyond reach of law, or physic.

At his wholly unexpected arrest he had leapt from his chair and in half a minute succumbed. Dr. Forbes quickly found that the widow needed all his care.

To John Ringrose's satisfaction, Ann Jay, an hour later, was able to add a measure of testimony to the circumstantial evidence responsible for her husband's death. She had been fully conscious that his mind was clouded and, by many bitter and blasphemous speeches, he had indirectly led her to fear that he was involved in the crime. He

had lived to appreciate its futility and to know that his legacy was safe with Vincent Maydew. Asked concerning her husband's wound, she explained it.

'He told me a knife fell from a shelf and stabbed him,' she said; but Ringrose perceived the bearing of this incident and knew the wound self-inflicted.

'He wanted blood for the nightdress which he'd taken from Miss Forrester's chest of drawers,' he explained to Inspector Burrows, the doctor, and Maydew, when they were alone; 'and there was no tap to turn on but his own. He cut himself, therefore, and he cut pretty deep. Then the wound gave trouble and didn't heal.'

. . . . .

John Ringrose left Twambley on the following morning and spoke a last few words to Vincent Maydew before he did so. 'I shall be down again for the inquest when it finishes,' he said, 'and then all's cleared up. Meantime, one thing. On your life never breathe a word of what you've been through to Miss Forrester. The facts she has got to know, of course; but the inference, that has given you such a hell of a time, must be hidden from her for evermore. That's easy. Your gloom was caused by the horrible discovery that somebody was plotting against her—no more than that.'

'Trust me there. I'd rather die than that she should hear what I feared. And—you—how can I thank you, Ringrose?'

'Why should you? I'll take one of those cigars, please, for the journey. And I'll say one thing more. Believe me, I was never better pleased to

cut a knot than this. Here, by the way, is your cheque.'

He handed it to Vincent, who pressed it back upon him.

'At least keep that. I'd thankfully double it. You've saved two lives.'

Mr. Ringrose laughed, folded the cheque into a spill, walked to the fire, and thrust it in. Then he lighted his cigar with it.

'I can burn money as well as the best, you see!' he said. 'There's Mr. Burrows and the Ford coming up the drive. My respects to your lady. And bear up—bear up! Good-bye, my lad, and Heaven bless you both.'

A TIGER'S SKIN

By W. W. Jacobs

The travelling sign-painter who was repainting the sign of the 'Cauliflower' was enjoying a well-earned respite from his labours. On the old table under the shade of the elms mammoth sandwiches and a large slice of cheese waited in an untied handkerchief until such time as his thirst should be satisfied. At the other side of the table the oldest man in Claybury, drawing gently at a long clay pipe, turned a dim and regretful eye up at the old sign-board.

'I've drunk my beer under it for pretty near seventy years,' he said, with a sigh. 'It's a pity it couldn't ha' lasted my time.'

The painter, slowly pushing a wedge of sandwich into his mouth, regarded him indulgently.

'It's all through two young gentlemen as was passing through 'ere a month or two ago,' continued the old man; 'they told Smith, the landlord, they'd been looking all over the place for the "Cauliflower," and when Smith showed 'em the sign they said they thought it was the "George the Fourth," and a very good likeness, too.'

The painter laughed and took another look at the old sign; then, with the nervousness of the true artist, he took a look at his own. One or two shadows——

He flung his legs over the bench and took up his brushes. In ten minutes the most fervent loyalist would have looked in vain for any resemblance, and with a sigh at the pitfalls which beset the artist he

returned to his interrupted meal and hailed the house for more beer.

'There's nobody could mistake your sign for anything but a cauliflower,' said the old man; 'it looks good enough to eat.'

The painter smiled and pushed his mug across the table. He was a tender-hearted man, and once —when painting the sign of the 'Sir Wilfrid Lawson'—knew himself what it was to lack beer. He began to discourse on art, and spoke somewhat disparagingly of the cauliflower as a subject. With a shake of his head he spoke of the possibilities of a spotted cow or a blue lion.

'Talking of lions,' said the ancient musingly, 'I s'pose as you never 'eard tell of the Claybury tiger? It was afore your time in these parts, I expect.'

The painter admitted his ignorance, and, finding that the allusion had no reference to an inn, pulled out his pipe and prepared to listen.

'It 's a while ago now,' said the old man slowly, 'and the circus the tiger belonged to was going through Claybury to get to Wickham, when, just as they was passing Gill 's farm, a steam-ingine they 'ad to draw some o' the vans broke down, and they 'ad to stop while the blacksmith mended it. That being so, they put up a big tent and 'ad the circus 'ere.

'I was one o' them as went, and I must say it was worth the money, though Henery Walker was disappointed at the man who put 'is 'ead in the lion's mouth. He said that the man frightened the lion first, before 'e did it.

'It was a great night for Claybury, and for about a week nothing else was talked of. All the children was playing at being lions and tigers and such-like,

and young Roberts pretty near broke 'is back trying to see if he could ride horseback standing up.

'It was about two weeks after the circus 'ad gone when a strange thing 'appened: the big tiger broke loose. Bill Chambers brought the news first, 'aving read it in the newspaper while 'e was 'aving his tea. He brought out the paper and showed us, and soon after we 'eard all sorts o' tales of its doings.

'At first we thought the tiger was a long way off, and we was rather amused at it. Frederick Scott laughed 'imself silly a'most up 'ere one night thinking 'ow surprised a man would be if 'e come 'ome one night and found the tiger sitting in his armchair eating the baby. It didn't seem much of a laughing matter to me, and I said so; none of us liked it, and even Sam Jones, as 'ad got twins for the second time, said "Shame!" But Frederick Scott was a man as would laugh at anything.

'When we 'eard that the tiger 'ad been seen within three miles of Claybury things began to look serious, and Peter Gubbins said that something ought to be done, but before we could think of anything to do something 'appened.

'We was sitting up 'ere one evening 'aving a mug o' beer and a pipe—same as I might be now if I 'd got any bacey left—and talking about it, when we 'eard a shout and saw a ragged-looking tramp running towards us as 'ard as he could run. Every now and then he'd look over 'is shoulder and give a shout, and then run 'arder than before.

'It 's the *tiger*!' ses Bill Chambers, and afore you could wink a'most he was inside the house, 'aving first upset Smith and a pot o' beer in the doorway.

'Before he could get up, Smith 'ad to wait till we

was all in. His langwidge was awful for a man as 'ad a license to lose, and everybody shouting "Tiger!" as they trod on 'im didn't ease 'is mind. He was inside a'most as soon as the last man, though, and in a flash he 'ad the door bolted just as the tramp flung 'imself agin it, all out of breath and sobbing 'is hardest to be let in.

'"Open the door," he ses, banging on it.

'"Go away," ses Smith.

'"It 's the tiger," screams the tramp; "open the door."

'"You go away," ses Smith, "you're attracting it to my place; run up the road and draw it off."

'Just at that moment John Biggs, the blacksmith, came in from the taproom, and as soon as he 'eard wot was the matter 'e took down Smith's gun from behind the bar and said he was going out to look after the wimmen and children.

'"Open the door," he ses.

'He was trying to get out and the tramp outside was trying to get in, but Smith held on to that door like a Briton. Then John Biggs lost 'is temper, and he ups with the gun – Smith's own gun, mind you— and fetches 'im a bang over the 'ead with it. Smith fell down at once, and afore we could 'elp ourselves the door was open, the tramp was inside, and John Biggs was running up the road, shouting 'is hardest.

'We 'ad the door closed afore you could wink a'most, and then, while the tramp lay in a corner 'aving brandy, Mrs. Smith got a bowl of water and a sponge and knelt down bathing 'er husband's 'ead with it.

'"Did you see the tiger?" ses Bill Chambers.

'"See it?" ses the tramp, with a shiver. "Oh, Lord!"

'He made signs for more brandy, and Henery Walker, wot was acting as landlord, without being asked, gave it to 'im.

'"It chased me for over a mile," ses the tramp; "my 'eart's breaking."

'He gave a groan and fainted right off. A terrible faint it was, too, and for some time we thought 'e'd never come round agin. First they poured brandy down 'is throat, then gin, and then beer, and still 'e didn't come round, but lay quiet with 'is eyes closed and a horrible smile on 'is face.

'He come round at last, and with nothing stronger than water, which Mrs. Smith kept pouring into 'is mouth. First thing we noticed was that the smile went, then 'is eyes opened, and suddenly 'e sat up with a shiver and gave such a dreadful scream that we thought at first the tiger was on top of us.

'Then 'e told us 'ow he was sitting washing 'is shirt in a ditch, when he 'eard a snuffling noise and saw the 'ead of a big tiger sticking through the hedge the other side. He left 'is shirt and ran, and 'e said that, fortunately, the tiger stopped to tear the shirt to pieces, else 'is last hour would 'ave arrived.

'When 'e 'ad finished Smith went upstairs and looked out of the bedroom winders, but 'e couldn't see any signs of the tiger, and 'e said no doubt it 'ad gone down to the village to see wot it could pick up, or p'raps it 'ad eaten John Biggs.

'However that might be, nobody cared to go outside to see, and after it got dark we liked going 'ome less than ever.

'Up to ten o'clock we did very well, and then Smith began to talk about 'is license. He said it was all rubbish being afraid to go 'ome, and that, at any

rate, the tiger couldn't eat more than one of us, and while 'e was doing that there was the chance for the others to get 'ome safe. Two or three of 'em took a dislike to Smith that night and told 'im so.

'The end of it was we all slept in the tap-room that night. It seemed strange at first, but anything was better than going 'ome in the dark, and we all slept till about four next morning, when we woke up and found the tramp 'ad gone and left the front door standing wide open.

'We took a careful look-out, and by-and-by first one started off and then another to see whether their wives and children 'ad been eaten or not. Not a soul 'ad been touched, but the wimmen and children was that scared there was no doing anything with 'em. None 'o the children would go to school, and they sat at 'ome all day with the front winder blocked up with a mattress to keep the tiger out.

'Nobody liked going to work, but it 'ad to be done, and as Farmer Gill said that tigers went to sleep all day and only came out toward evening we was a bit comforted. Not a soul went up to the "Cauliflower" that evening for fear of coming 'ome in the dark, but as nothing 'appened that night we began to 'ope as the tiger 'ad travelled further on.

'Bob Pretty laughed at the whole thing and said 'e didn't believe there was a tiger; but nobody minded wot 'e said, Bob Pretty being, as I've often told people, the black sheep o' Claybury, wot with poaching and, wot was worse, 'is artfulness.

'But the very next morning something 'appened that made Bob Pretty look silly and wish 'e 'adn't talked quite so fast; for at five o'clock Frederick Scott, going down to feed 'is hins, found as the

tiger 'ad been there afore 'im and 'ad eaten no less than seven of 'em. The side of the hin-'ouse was all broke in, there was a few feathers lying on the ground, and two little chicks smashed and dead beside 'em.

'The way Frederick Scott went on about it you'd 'ardly believe. He said that Govinment 'ud 'ave to make it up to 'im, and instead o' going to work 'e put the two little chicks and the feathers into a pudding basin and walked to Cudford, four miles off, where they 'ad a policeman.

'He saw the policeman, William White by name, standing at the back door of the "Fox and Hounds" public-house, throwing a 'andful o' corn to the landlord's fowls, and the first thing Mr. White ses was, "it's off my beat," he ses.

'"But you might do it in your spare time, Mr. White," ses Frederick Scott. "It's very likely that the tiger'll come back to my hin-'ouse for the rest of 'em, and he'd be very surprised if 'e popped 'is 'ead in and see you there waiting for 'im."

'"He'd 'ave reason to be," ses Policeman White, staring at 'im.

'"Think of the praise you'd get," said Frederick Scott, coaxing like.

'"Look 'ere," ses Policeman White, "if you don't take yourself and that pudding basin off pretty quick, you'll come along o' me, d'ye see? You've been drinking and you're in a excited state."

'He gave Frederick Scott a push and follered 'im along the road, and every time Frederick stopped to ask 'im wot 'e was doing of 'e gave 'im another push to show 'im.

'Frederick Scott told us all about it that evening,

and some of the bravest of us went up to the "Cauliflower" to talk over wot was to be done, though we took care to get 'ome while it was quite light. That night Peter Gubbins's two pigs went. They were two o' the likeliest pigs I ever seed, and all Peter Gubbins could do was to sit up in bed shivering and listening to their squeals as the tiger dragged 'em off. Pretty near all Claybury was round that sty next morning looking at the broken fence. Some of them looked for the tiger's footmarks, but it was dry weather and they couldn't see any. Nobody knew whose turn it would be next, and the most sensible man there, Sam Jones, went straight off 'ome and killed his pig afore 'e went to work.

'Nobody knew what to do; Farmer Hall said as it was a soldier's job, and 'e drove over to Wickham to tell the police so, but nothing came of it, and that night at ten minutes to twelve Bill Chambers's pig went. It was one o' the biggest pigs ever raised in Claybury, but the tiger got it off as easy as possible. Bill 'ad the bravery to look out of the winder when 'e 'eard the pig squeal, but there was such a awful snarling noise that 'e daresn't move 'and or foot.

'Dicky Weed's idea was for people with pigs and such-like to keep 'em in the house of a night, but Peter Gubbins and Bill Chambers both pointed out that the tiger could break a back door with one blow of 'is paw, and that if 'e got inside he might take something else instead o' pig. And they said that it was no worse for other people to lose pigs than wot it was for them.

'The odd thing about it was that all this time nobody 'ad ever seen the tiger except the tramp, and people sent their children back to school agin and

felt safe going about in the daytime till little Charlie Gubbins came running 'ome crying and saying that 'e'd seen it. Next morning a lot more children see it and was afraid to go to school, and people began to wonder wot 'ud happen when all the pigs and poultry was eaten.

"Then Henery Walker see it. We was sitting inside 'ere with scythes, and pitchforks, and such-like things handy, when we see 'im come in without 'is hat. His eyes were staring and 'is hair was rumpled. He called for a pot o' ale and drank it nearly off, and then 'e sat gasping and 'olding the mug between 'is legs and shaking 'is 'ead at the floor till everybody 'ad left off talking to look at 'im.

"'Wot's the matter, Henery?' ses one of 'em.

"'Don't ask me,' ses Henery Walker, with a shiver.

"'You don't mean to say as 'ow you've seen the tiger?' ses Bill Chambers.

"Henery Walker didn't answer 'im. He got up and walked back'ards and for'ards, still with that frightened look in 'is eyes, and once or twice 'e give such a terrible start that 'e frightened us 'arf out of our wits. Then Bill Chambers took and forced 'im into a chair and give 'im two o' gin and patted 'im on the back, and at last Henery Walker got 'is senses back agin and told us 'ow the tiger 'ad chased 'im all round and round the trees in Plashett's Wood until 'e managed to climb up a tree and escape it. He said the tiger 'ad kept 'im there for over an hour, and then suddenly turned round and bolted off up the road to Wickham.

"It was a merciful escape, and everybody said so except Sam Jones, and 'e asked so many questions

that at last Henery Walker asked 'im outright if 'e disbelieved 'is word.

"'It's all right, Sam," ses Bob Pretty, as 'ad come in just after Henery Walker. "I see 'im with the tiger after 'im."

"'Wot?" ses Henery, staring at him.

"'I see it all, Henery," ses Bob Pretty, "and I see your pluck. It was all you could do to make up your mind to run from it. I believe if you'd 'ad a fork in your 'and you'd 'ave made a fight for it."

'Everybody said "Bravo!" but Henery Walker didn't seem to like it at all. He sat still, looking at Bob Pretty, and at last 'e ses, "Where was you?" 'e ses.

"'Up another tree, Henery, where you couldn't see me," ses Bob Pretty, smiling at 'im.

'Henery Walker, wot was drinking some beer, choked a bit, and then 'e put the mug down and went straight off 'ome without saying a word to anybody. I knew 'e didn't like Bob Pretty, but I couldn't see why 'e should be cross about 'is speaking up for 'im as 'e had done, but Bob said as it was 'is modesty, and 'e thought more of 'im for it.

'After that things got worse than ever; the wimmen and children stayed indoors and kept the doors shut, and the men never knew when they went out to work whether they'd come 'ome agin. They used to kiss their children afore they went out of a morning, and their wives too, some of 'em; even men who'd been married for years did. And several more of 'em see the tiger while they was at work, and came running 'ome to tell about it.

'The tiger 'ad been making free with Claybury

pigs and such-like for pretty near a week, and nothing 'ad been done to try and catch it, and wot made Claybury men madder than anything else was folks at Wickham saying it was all a mistake, and the tiger 'adn't escaped at all. Even parson, who'd been away for a holiday, said so, and Henery Walker told 'is wife that if she ever set foot inside the church agin 'e'd ask 'is old mother to come and live with 'em.

'It was all very well for parson to talk, but the very night he come back Henery Walker's pig went, and at the same time George Kettle lost five or six ducks.

'He was a quiet man, was George, but when 'is temper was up 'e didn't care for anything. Afore he came to Claybury 'e 'ad been in the Militia, and that evening at the "Cauliflower" 'e turned up with a gun over 'is shoulder and made a speech, and asked who was game to go with 'im and hunt the tiger. Bill Chambers, who was still grieving after 'is pig, said 'e would, then another man offered, until at last there was seventeen of 'em. Some of 'em 'ad scythes and some pitchforks, and one or two of 'em guns, and it was one o' the finest sights I ever seed when George Kettle stood 'em in rows of four and marched 'em off.

'They went straight up the road, then across Farmer Gill's fields to get to Plashett's wood, where they thought the tiger' ud most likely be, and the nearer they got to the wood the slower they walked. The sun 'ad just gone down and the wood looked very quiet and dark, but John Biggs, the blacksmith, and George Kettle walked in first and the others follered, keeping so close together that Sam

Jones 'ad a few words over his shoulder with Bill Chambers about the way 'e was carrying 'is pitch-fork.

'Every now and then somebody 'ud say, "*Wot 's that?*" and they 'd all stop and crowd together and think the time 'ad come, but it 'adn't, and then they 'd go on agin, trembling, until they 'd walked all round the wood without seeing anything but one or two rabbits. John Biggs and George Kettle wanted for to stay there till it was dark, but the others wouldn't 'ear of it for fear of frightening their wives, and just as it was getting dark they all come tramp, tramp, back to the "Caulitlower" agin.

'Smith stood 'em 'arf a pint apiece, and they was all outside 'ere fancying theirselves a bit for wot they 'd done when we see old man Parsley coming along on two sticks as fast as 'e could come.

"'Are you brave lads a-looking for the tiger?" he asks.

"'Yes," ses John Biggs.

"'Then 'urry up, for the sake of mercy," ses old Mr. Parsley, putting 'is 'and on the table and going off into a fit of coughing; "it 's just gone into Bob Pretty 's cottage. I was passing and saw it."

'George Kettle snatches up 'is gun and shouts out to 'is men to come along. Some of 'em was for 'anging back at first, some because they didn't like the tiger and some because they didn't like Bob Pretty, but John Biggs drove 'em in front of 'im like a flock o' sheep and then they gave a cheer and ran after George Kettle, full pelt up the road.

'A few wimmen and children was at their doors as they passed, but they took fright and went indoors screaming. There was a lamp in Bob Pretty 's

front room, but the door was closed and the 'ouse was silent as the grave.

'George Kettle and the men with the guns went first, then came the pitchforks, and last of all the scythes. Just as George Kettle put 'is 'and on the door he 'eard something moving inside, and the next moment the door opened and there stood Bob Pretty.

'"What the dickens!" 'e ses, starting back as 'e see the guns and pitchforks pointing at 'im.

'"'Ave you killed it, Bob?" ses George Kettle.

'"Killed *wot?*" ses Bob Pretty. "Be careful o' them guns. Take your fingers off the triggers."

'"The tiger 's in your 'ouse, Bob," ses George Kettle, in a whisper. "'Ave you on'y just come in?"

'"Look 'ere," ses Bob Pretty. "I don't want any o' your games. You go and play 'em somewhere else."

'"It ain't a game," ses John Biggs; "the tiger 's in your 'ouse and we 're going to kill it. Now, then, lads."

'They all went in in a 'eap, pushing Bob Pretty in front of 'em, till the room was full. Only one man with a scythe got in, and they wouldn't 'ave let 'im in if they 'd known. It a'most made 'em forget the tiger for the time.

'George Kettle opened the door wot led into the kitchen, and then 'e sprang back with such a shout that the man with the scythe tried to escape, taking Henery Walker along with 'im. George Kettle tried to speak, but couldn't. All 'e could do was to point with 'is finger at Bob Pretty's kitchen—*and Bob Pretty's kitchen was for all the world like a pork butcher's shop.* There was jointes o' pork 'anging from

the ceiling, two brace tubsses full as they could be, and quite a string of fowls and ducks all ready for market.

"'Wot d've mean by coming into my 'ouse?" sez Bob Pretty, bluetering. "If you don't clear out pretty quick, I'll make you"

'Nobody answered 'im; they was all examining 'ands o' pork and fowls and such like.

"'There's the tiger," sez Henery Walker, pointing at Bob Pretty, "that 's wot old man Parsley meant."

"'Somebody go and fetch Policeman White," sez a voice.

"'I wish they would," sez Bob Pretty. "I'll 'ave the law on you all for breaking into my 'ouse like this, see if I don't."

"'Where'd you get all this pork from?" sez the blacksmith.

"'And them ducks and hins?" sez George Kettle.

"'That 's my business," sez Bob Pretty, staring 'em full in the face. "I just 'ad a excellent opportunity offered me of going into the pork and poultry line and I took it. Now, all them as doesn't want to buy my pork or fowls go out o' my house."

"'You're a thief, Bob Pretty!" says Henery Walker. "You stole it all."

"'Take care wot you're saying, Henery," sez Bob Pretty, "else I'll make you prove your words."

"'You stole my pig," sez Herbert Smith.

"'Oh, 'ave I?" sez Bob, reaching down a 'and o' pork. "Is that your pig?" he sez.

"'It 's just about the size o' my poor pig," sez Herbert Smith.

"'Very usual size, I call it," sez Bob Pretty, "and them ducks and hins very usual looking hins and ducks, I call 'em, except that they don't grow 'em

so fat in these parts. It 's a fine thing when a man 's doing a honest bisness to 'ave these charges brought agin 'im. Dis'eartening, I call it. I don't mind telling you that the tiger got in at my back winder the other night and took 'arf a pound o' sausage, but you don't 'ear me complaining and going about calling other people thieves."

"'Tiger be hanged," ses Henery Walker, who was almost certain that a loin o' pork on the table was off 'is pig; "you're the only tiger in these parts."

"'Why, Henery," ses Bob Pretty, "wot are you a-thinkin' of? Where's your memory? Why, it 's on'y two or three days ago you see it and 'ad to get up a tree out of its way."

'He smiled and shook 'is 'ead at 'im, but Henery Walker on'y kept opening and shutting 'is mouth, and at last 'e went outside without saying a word.

"'And Sam Jones see it too," ses Bob Pretty; "didn't you, Sam?"

'Sam didn't answer 'im.

"'And Charlie Hall and Jack Minns and a lot more," ses Bob; "besides, I see it myself. I can believe my own eyes, I s'pose?"

"'We 'll have the law on you," ses Sam Jones.

"'As *you* like," ses Bob Pretty; "but I tell you plain, I 've got all the bills for this properly made out, up-stairs. And there 's pretty near a dozen of you as'll 'ave to go in the box and swear as you saw the tiger. Now, can I sell any of you a bit o' pork afore you go? It 's delicious eating, and as soon as you taste it you 'll know it wasn't grown in Claybury. Or a pair o' ducks wot 'ave come from two 'undered miles off, and yet look as fresh as if they was on'y killed last night."

'George Kettle, whose ducks 'ad gone the night afore, went into the front room and walked up and down fighting for 'is breath, but it was all no good, nobody ever got the better o' Bob Pretty. None of 'em could swear to their property, and even when it became known a month later that Bob Pretty and the tramp knew each other, nothing was done. But nobody ever 'eard any more of the tiger from that day to this.'

THE MAN WITH THE NAILED SHOES

By R. Austin Freeman

There are, I suppose, few places even on the East Coast of England more lonely and remote than the village of Little Sundersley and the country that surrounds it. Far from any railway, and some miles distant from any considerable town, it remains an outpost of civilization, in which primitive manners and customs and old-world tradition linger on into an age that has elsewhere forgotten them. In the summer, it is true, a small contingent of visitors, adventurous in spirit, though mostly of sedate and solitary habits, make their appearance to swell its meagre population, and impart to the wide stretches of smooth sand that fringe its shores a fleeting air of life and sober gaiety; but in late September—the season of the year in which I made its acquaintance—its pasture-lands lie desolate, the rugged paths along the cliffs are seldom trodden by human foot, and the sands are a desert waste on which, for days together, no footprint appears save that left by some passing sea-bird.

I had been assured by my medical agent, Mr. Turcival, that I should find the practice of which I was now taking charge 'an exceedingly soft billet, and suitable for a studious man;' and certainly he had not misled me, for the patients were, in fact, so few that I was quite concerned for my principal, and rather dull for want of work. Hence, when my friend John Thorndyke, the well-known medico-legal expert, proposed to come down and stay with me for a week-end and perhaps a few days beyond,

I hailed the proposal with delight, and welcomed him with open arms.

'You certainly don't seem to be overworked, Jervis,' he remarked, as we turned out of the gate after tea, on the day of his arrival, for a stroll on the shore. 'Is this a new practice, or an old one in a state of senile decay?'

'Why, the fact is,' I answered, 'there is virtually no practice. Cooper—my principal—has been here about six years, and as he has private means he has never made any serious effort to build one up; and the other man, Dr. Burrows, being uncommonly keen, and the people very conservative, Cooper has never really got his foot in. However, it doesn't seem to trouble him.'

'Well, if he is satisfied, I suppose you are,' said Thorndyke, with a smile. 'You are getting a seaside holiday, and being paid for it. But I didn't know you were as near to the sea as this.'

We were entering, as he spoke, an artificial gapway cut through the low cliff, forming a steep cart-track down to the shore. It was locally known as Sundersley Gap, and was used principally, when used at all, by the farmers' carts which came down to gather seaweed after a gale.

'What a magnificent stretch of sand!' continued Thorndyke, as we reached the bottom, and stood looking out seaward across the deserted beach. 'There is something very majestic and solemn in a great expanse of sandy shore when the tide is out, and I know of nothing which is capable of conveying the impression of solitude so completely. The smooth, unbroken surface not only displays itself untenanted for the moment, but it offers convincing

testimony that it has lain thus undisturbed through a considerable lapse of time. Here, for instance, we have clear evidence that for several days only two pairs of feet besides our own have trodden this gap.'

'How do you arrive at the "several days"?' I asked.

'In the simplest manner possible,' he replied. 'The moon is now in the third quarter, and the tides are consequently neap-tides. You can see quite plainly the two lines of seaweed and jetsam which indicate the high-water marks of the spring-tides and the neap-tides respectively. The strip of comparatively dry sand between them, over which the water has not risen for several days, is, as you see, marked by only two sets of footprints, and those footprints will not be completely obliterated by the sea until the next spring-tide—nearly a week from to-day.'

'Yes, I see now, and the thing appears obvious enough when one has heard the explanation. But it is really rather odd that no one should have passed through this gap for days, and then that four persons should have come here within quite a short interval of one another.'

'What makes you think they have done so?' Thorndyke asked.

'Well,' I replied, 'both of these sets of footprints appear to be quite fresh, and to have been made about the same time.'

'Not at the same time, Jervis,' rejoined Thorndyke. 'There is certainly an interval of several hours between them, though precisely how many hours we cannot judge, since there has been so little wind lately to disturb them; but the fisherman

unquestionably passed here not more than three hours ago, and I should say probably within an hour; whereas the other man—who seems to have come up from a boat to fetch something of considerable weight—returned through the gap certainly not less, and probably more, than four hours ago.'

I gazed at my friend in blank astonishment, for these events befell in the days before I had joined him as his assistant, and his special knowledge and powers of inference were not then fully appreciated by me.

'It is clear, Thorndyke,' I said, 'that footprints have a very different meaning to you from what they have for me. I don't see in the least how you have reached any of these conclusions.'

'I suppose not,' was the reply; 'but, you see, special knowledge of this kind is the stock-in-trade of the medical jurist, and has to be acquired by special study, though the present example is one of the greatest simplicity. But let us consider it point by point; and first we will take this set of footprints which I have inferred to be a fisherman's. Note their enormous size. They should be the footprints of a giant. But the length of the stride shows that they were made by a rather short man. Then observe the massiveness of the soles, and the fact that there are no nails in them. Note also the peculiar clumsy tread—the deep toe and heel marks, as if the walker had wooden legs, or fixed ankles and knees. From that character we can safely infer high boots of thick, rigid leather, so that we can diagnose high boots, massive and stiff, with nailless soles, and many sizes too large for the wearer. But

the only boot that answers this description is the fisherman's thigh-boot—made of enormous size to enable him to wear in the winter two or three pairs of thick knitted stockings, one over the other. Now look at the other footprints; there is a double track, you see, one set coming from the sea and one going towards it. As the man (who was bow-legged and turned his toes in) has trodden in his own footprints, it is obvious that he came from the sea, and returned to it. But observe the difference in the two sets of prints; the returning ones are much deeper than the others, and the stride much shorter. Evidently he was carrying something when he returned, and that something was very heavy. Moreover, we can see, by the greater depth of the toe impressions, that he was stooping forward as he walked, and so probably carried the weight on his back. Is that quite clear?'

'Perfectly,' I replied. 'But how do you arrive at the interval of time between the visits of the two men?'

'That also is quite simple. The tide is now about halfway out; it is thus about three hours since high water. Now, the fisherman walked just about the neap-tide, high-water mark, sometimes above it and sometimes below. But none of his footprints have been obliterated; therefore he passed after high water—that is, less than three hours ago; and since his footprints are all equally distinct, he could not have passed when the sand was very wet. Therefore he probably passed less than an hour ago. The other man's footprints, on the other hand, reach only to the neap-tide, high-water mark, where they end abruptly. The sea has washed over the re-

mainder of the tracks and obliterated them. Therefore he passed not less than three hours and not more than four days ago—probably within twenty-four hours.'

As Thorndyke concluded his demonstration the sound of voices was borne to us from above, mingled with the tramping of feet, and immediately afterwards a very singular party appeared at the head of the gap descending towards the shore. First came a short burly fisherman clad in oilskins and sou'-wester, clumping along awkwardly in his great sea-boots, then the local police-sergeant in company with my professional rival Dr. Burrows, while the rear of the procession was brought up by two constables carrying a stretcher. As he reached the bottom of the gap the fisherman, who was evidently acting as guide, turned along the shore, retracing his own tracks, and the procession followed in his wake.

'A surgeon, a stretcher, two constables, and a police-sergeant,' observed Thorndyke. 'What does that suggest to your mind, Jervis?'

'A fall from the cliff,' I replied, 'or a body washed up on the shore.'

'Probably,' he rejoined; 'but we may as well walk in that direction.'

We turned to follow the retreating procession, and as we strode along the smooth surface left by the retiring tide Thorndyke resumed:

'The subject of footprints has always interested me deeply for two reasons. First, the evidence furnished by footprints is constantly being brought forward, and is often of cardinal importance; and, secondly, the whole subject is capable of really

systematic and scientific treatment. In the main the data are anatomical, but age, sex, occupation, health, and disease all give their various indications. Clearly, for instance, the footprints of an old man will differ from those of a young man of the same height, and I need not point out to you that those of a person suffering from locomotor ataxia or paralysis agitans would be quite unmistakable.'

'Yes, I see that plainly enough,' I said.

'Here, now,' he continued, 'is a case in point.' He halted to point with his stick at a row of footprints that appeared suddenly above high-water mark, and having proceeded a short distance, crossed the line again, and vanished where the waves had washed over them. They were easily distinguished from any of the others by the clear impressions of circular rubber heels.

'Do you see anything remarkable about them?' he asked.

'I notice that they are considerably deeper than our own,' I answered.

'Yes, and the boots are about the same size as ours, whereas the stride is considerably shorter—quite a short stride, in fact. Now there is a pretty constant ratio between the length of the foot and the length of the leg, between the length of leg and the height of the person, and between the stature and the length of stride. A long foot means a long leg, a tall man, and a long stride. But here we have a long foot and a short stride. What do you make of that?' He laid down his stick—a smooth partridge cane, one side of which was marked by small lines into inches and feet—beside the footprints to demonstrate the discrepancy.

'The depth of the footprints shows that he was a much heavier man than either of us,' I suggested; 'perhaps he was unusually fat.'

'Yes,' said Thorndyke, 'that seems to be the explanation. The carrying of a dead weight shortens the stride, and fat is practically a dead weight. The conclusion is that he was about five feet ten inches high, and excessively fat.' He picked up his cane, and we resumed our walk, keeping an eye on the procession ahead until it had disappeared round a curve in the coast-line, when we mended our pace somewhat. Presently we reached a small headland, and, turning the shoulder of cliff, came full upon the party which had preceded us. The men had halted in a narrow bay, and now stood looking down at a prostrate figure beside which the surgeon was kneeling.

'We were wrong, you see,' observed Thorndyke. 'He has not fallen over the cliff, nor has he been washed up by the sea. He is lying above high-water mark, and these footprints that we have been examining appear to be his.'

As we approached, the sergeant turned and held up his hand.

'I'll ask you not to walk round the body just now, gentlemen,' he said. 'There seems to have been foul play here, and I want to be clear about the tracks before any one crosses them.'

Acknowledging this caution, we advanced to where the constables were standing, and looked down with some curiosity at the dead man. He was a tall, frail-looking man, thin to the point of emaciation, and appeared to be about thirty-five years of age. He lay in an easy posture, with half-closed

eyes and a placid expression that contrasted strangely enough with the tragic circumstances of his death.

'It is a clear case of murder,' said Dr. Burrows, dusting the sand from his knees as he stood up. 'There is a deep knife-wound above the heart, which must have caused death almost instantaneously.'

'How long should you say he has been dead, Doctor?' asked the sergeant.

'Twelve hours at least,' was the reply. 'He is quite cold and stiff.'

PLAN OF ST. BRIDGET'S BAY.

† Position of body. A, Top of Shepherd's Path. B, Overhanging cliff. C, Footpath along edge of cliff. D D D, Tracks of Hearn's shoes. E, Tracks of nailed shoes. F, Shepherd's Path ascending shelving cliff.

'Twelve hours, eh?' repeated the officer. 'That would bring it to about six o'clock this morning.'

'I won't commit myself to a definite time,' said Dr. Burrows hastily. 'I only say not *less* than twelve hours. It might have been considerably more.'

'Ah!' said the sergeant. 'Well, he made a pretty good fight for his life, to all appearances.' He nodded at the sand, which for some feet around the body bore the deeply indented marks of feet, as though a furious struggle had taken place. 'It 's a mighty queer affair,' pursued the sergeant, addressing Dr. Burrows. 'There seems to have been only one man in it—there is only one set of footprints besides those of the deceased—and we've got to find out who he is; and I reckon there won't be much trouble about that, seeing the kind of trade-marks he has left behind him.'

'No,' agreed the surgeon; 'there ought not to be much trouble in identifying those boots. He would seem to be a labourer, judging by the hobnails.'

'No, sir; not a labourer,' dissented the sergeant. 'The foot is too small, for one thing; and then the nails are not regular hobnails. They're a good deal smaller; and a labourer's boots would have the nails all round the edges, and there would be iron tips on the heels, and probably on the toes too. Now these have got no tips, and the nails are arranged in a pattern on the soles and heels. They are probably shooting-boots or sporting shoes of some kind.' He strode to and fro with his note-book in his hand, writing down hasty memoranda, and stooping to scrutinize the impressions in the sand. The surgeon also busied himself in noting down the facts concerning which he would have to give evidence, while Thorndyke regarded in silence and with an air of intense preoccupation the footprints around the body which remained to testify to the circumstances of the crime.

'It is pretty clear, up to a certain point,' the ser-

geant observed, as he concluded his investigations, 'how the affair happened, and it is pretty clear, too, that the murder was premeditated. You see, Doctor, the deceased gentleman, Mr. Hearn, was apparently walking home from Port Marston; we saw his footprints along the shore—those rubber heels make them easy to identify—and he didn't go down Sundersley Gap. He probably meant to climb up the cliff by that little track that you see there, which the people about here call the Shepherd's Path. Now the murderer must have known that he was coming, and waited upon the cliff to keep a look-out. When he saw Mr. Hearn enter the bay, he came down the path and attacked him, and, after a tough struggle, succeeded in stabbing him. Then he turned and went back up the path. You can see the double track between the path and the place where the struggle took place, and the footprints going to the path are on top of those coming from it.'

'If you follow the tracks,' said Dr. Burrows, 'you ought to be able to see where the murderer went to.'

'I'm afraid not,' replied the sergeant. 'There are no marks on the path itself—the rock is too hard, and so is the ground above, I fear. But I'll go over it carefully all the same.'

The investigations being so far concluded, the body was lifted on to the stretcher, and the cortège, consisting of the bearers, the Doctor, and the fisherman, moved off towards the Gap, while the sergeant, having civilly wished us 'Good evening', scrambled up the Shepherd's Path and vanished above.

'A very smart officer that,' said Thorndyke. 'I should like to know what he wrote in his note-book.'

'His account of the circumstances of the murder seemed a very reasonable one,' I said.

'Very. He noted the plain and essential facts, and drew the natural conclusions from them. But there are some very singular features in this case; so singular that I am disposed to make a few notes for my own information.'

He stooped over the place where the body had lain, and having narrowly examined the sand there and in the place where the dead man's feet had rested, drew out his note-book and made a memorandum. He next made a rapid sketch-plan of the bay, marking the position of the body and the various impressions in the sand, and then, following the double track leading from and to the Shepherd's Path, scrutinized the footprints with the deepest attention, making copious notes and sketches in his book.

'We may as well go up by the Shepherd's Path,' said Thorndyke. 'I think we are equal to the climb, and there may be visible traces of the murderer after all. The rock is only a sandstone, and not a very hard one either.'

We approached the foot of the little rugged track which zigzagged up the face of the cliff, and, stooping down among the stiff, dry herbage, examined the surface. Here, at the bottom of the path, where the rock was softened by the weather, there were several distinct impressions on the crumbling surface of the murderer's nailed boots, though they were somewhat confused by the tracks of the sergeant, whose boots were heavily nailed. But as we ascended the marks became rather less distinct, and at quite a short distance from the foot of the cliff we

lost them altogether, though we had no difficulty in following the more recent traces of the sergeant's passage up the path.

When we reached the top of the cliff we paused to scan the path that ran along its edge, but here, too, although the sergeant's heavy boots had left quite visible impressions on the ground, there were no signs of any other feet. At a little distance the sagacious officer himself was pursuing his investigations, walking backwards and forwards with his body bent double, and his eyes fixed on the ground.

'Not a trace of him anywhere,' said he, straightening himself up as we approached. 'I was afraid there wouldn't be after all this dry weather. I shall have to try a different tack. This is a small place, and if those boots belong to any one living here they'll be sure to be known.'

'The deceased gentleman—Mr. Hearn, I think you called him,' said Thorndyke as we turned towards the village—'is he a native of the locality?'

'Oh no, sir,' replied the officer. 'He is almost a stranger. He has only been here about three weeks; but, you know, in a little place like this a man soon gets to be known—and his business, too, for that matter,' he added, with a smile.

'What was his business, then?' asked Thorndyke.

'Pleasure, I believe. He was down here for a holiday, though it's a good way past the season; but, then, he had a friend living here, and that makes a difference. Mr. Draper up at the Poplars was an old friend of his, I understand. I am going to call on him now.'

We walked on along the footpath that led towards the village, but had only proceeded two or

three hundred yards when a loud hail drew our attention to a man running across a field towards us from the direction of the cliff.

'Why, here is Mr. Draper himself,' exclaimed the sergeant, stopping short and waving his hand. 'I expect he has heard the news already.'

Thorndyke and I also halted, and with some curiosity watched the approach of this new party to the tragedy. As the stranger drew near we saw that he was a tall, athletic-looking man of about forty, dressed in a Norfolk knickerbocker suit, and having the appearance of an ordinary country gentleman, excepting that he carried in his hand, in place of a walking-stick, the staff of a butterfly-net, the folding ring and bag of which partly projected from his pocket.

'Is it true, Sergeant?' he exclaimed as he came up to us, panting from his exertions. 'About Mr. Hearn, I mean. There is a rumour that he has been found dead on the beach.'

'It 's quite true, sir, I am sorry to say; and, what is worse, he has been murdered.'

'My God! you don't say so!'

He turned towards us a face that must ordinarily have been jovial enough, but was now white and scared, and, after a brief pause, he exclaimed:

'Murdered! Good God! Poor old Hearn! How did it happen, Sergeant? and when? and is there any clue to the murderer?'

'We can't say for certain when it happened,' replied the sergeant; 'and as to the question of clues, I was just coming up to call on you.'

'On me!' exclaimed Draper, with a startled glance at the officer. 'What for?'

'Well, we should like to know something about Mr. Hearn—who he was, and whether he had any enemies, and so forth; anything, in fact, that would give us a hint where to look for the murderer. And you are the only person in the place who knew him at all intimately.'

Mr. Draper's pallid face turned a shade paler, and he glanced about him with an obviously embarrassed air.

'I'm afraid,' he began in a hesitating manner, 'I'm afraid I shan't be able to help you much. I didn't know much about his affairs. You see he was—well—only a casual acquaintance——'

'Well,' interrupted the sergeant, 'you can tell us who and what he was, and where he lived, and so forth. We'll find out the rest if you give us a start.'

'I see,' said Draper. 'Yes, I expect you will.' His eyes glanced restlessly to and fro, and he added presently: 'You must come up to-morrow, and have a talk with me about him, and I'll see what I can remember.'

'I'd rather come this evening,' said the sergeant firmly.

'Not this evening,' pleaded Draper. 'I'm feeling rather—this affair, you know, has upset me. I couldn't give proper attention——'

His sentence petered out into a hesitating mumble, and the officer looked at him in evident surprise at his nervous, embarrassed manner. His own attitude, however, was perfectly firm, though polite.

'I don't like pressing you, sir,' said he, 'but time is precious—we'll have to go single file here, this pond is a public nuisance. They ought to bank it up at this end. After you, sir.'

The pond to which the sergeant alluded had evidently extended at one time right across the path, but now, thanks to the dry weather, a narrow isthmus of half-dried mud traversed the morass, and along this Mr. Draper proceeded to pick his way. The sergeant was about to follow, when suddenly he stopped short with his eyes riveted upon the muddy track. A single glance showed me the cause of his surprise, for on the stiff, putty-like surface, standing out with the sharp distinctness of a wax mould, were the fresh footprints of the man who had just passed, each footprint displaying on its sole the impression of stud-nails arranged in a diamond-shaped pattern, and on its heel a group of similar nails arranged in a cross.

The sergeant hesitated for only a moment, in which he turned a quick startled glance upon us; then he followed, walking gingerly along the edge of the path as if to avoid treading in his predecessor's footprints. Instinctively we did the same, following closely, and anxiously awaiting the next development of the tragedy. For a minute or two we all proceeded in silence, the sergeant being evidently at a loss how to act, and Mr. Draper busy with his own thoughts. At length the former spoke.

'You think, Mr. Draper, you would rather that I looked in on you to-morrow about this affair?'

'Much rather, if you wouldn't mind,' was the eager reply.

'Then, in that case,' said the sergeant, looking at his watch, 'as I've got a good deal to see to this evening, I'll leave you here, and make my way to the station.'

With a farewell flourish of his hand he climbed

over a stile, and when, a few moments later, I caught a glimpse of him through an opening in the hedge, he was running across the meadow like a hare.

The departure of the police-officer was apparently a great relief to Mr. Draper, who at once fell back and began to talk with us.

'You are Dr. Jervis, I think,' said he. 'I saw you coming out of Dr. Cooper's house yesterday. We know everything that is happening in the village, you see.' He laughed nervously, and added: 'But I don't know your friend.'

I introduced Thorndyke, at the mention of whose name our new acquaintance knitted his brows, and glanced inquisitively at my friend.

'Thorndyke,' he repeated; 'the name seems familiar to me. Are you in the Law, sir?'

Thorndyke admitted the impeachment, and our companion, having again bestowed on him a look full of curiosity, continued: 'This horrible affair will interest you, no doubt, from a professional point of view. You were present when my poor friend's body was found, I think?'

'No,' replied Thorndyke; 'we came up afterwards, when they were removing it.'

Our companion then proceeded to question us about the murder, but received from Thorndyke only the most general and ambiguous replies. Nor was there time to go into the matter at length, for the footpath presently emerged on to the road close to Mr. Draper's house.

'You will excuse my not asking you in to-night,' said he, 'but you will understand that I am not in much form for visitors just now.'

We assured him that we fully understood, and, having wished him 'Good evening', pursued our way towards the village.

'The sergeant is off to get a warrant, I suppose,' I observed.

'Yes; and mighty anxious lest his man should be off before he can execute it. But he is fishing in deeper waters than he thinks, Jervis. This is a very singular and complicated case; one of the strangest, in fact, that I have ever met. I shall follow its development with deep interest.'

'The sergeant seems pretty cocksure, all the same,' I said.

'He is not to blame for that,' replied Thorndyke. 'He is acting on the obvious appearances, which is the proper thing to do in the first place. Perhaps his note-book contains more than I think it does. But we shall see.'

When we entered the village I stopped to settle some business with the chemist, who acted as Dr. Cooper's dispenser, suggesting to Thorndyke that he should walk on to the house; but when I emerged from the shop some ten minutes later he was waiting outside, with a smallish brown-paper parcel under each arm. Of one of these parcels I insisted on relieving him, in spite of his protests, but when he at length handed it to me its weight completely took me by surprise.

'I should have let them send this home on a barrow,' I remarked.

'So I should have done,' he replied, 'only I did not wish to draw attention to my purchase, or give my address.'

Accepting this hint I refrained from making any

inquiries as to the nature of the contents (although I must confess to considerable curiosity on the subject), and on arriving home I assisted him to deposit the two mysterious parcels in his room.

When I came downstairs a disagreeable surprise awaited me. Hitherto the long evenings had been spent by me in solitary and undisturbed enjoyment of Dr. Cooper's excellent library, but to-night a perverse fate decreed that I must wander abroad, because, forsooth, a preposterous farmer, who resided in a hamlet five miles distant, had chosen the evening of my guest's arrival to dislocate his bucolic elbow. I half hoped that Thorndyke would offer to accompany me, but he made no such suggestion, and in fact seemed by no means afflicted at the prospect of my absence.

'I have plenty to occupy me while you are away,' he said cheerfully; and with this assurance to comfort me I mounted my bicycle and rode off somewhat sulkily along the dark road.

My visit occupied in all a trifle under two hours, and when I reached home, ravenously hungry and heated by my ride, half-past nine had struck, and the village had begun to settle down for the night.

'Sergeant Payne is a-waiting in the surgery, sir,' the housemaid announced as I entered the hall.

'Confound Sergeant Payne!' I exclaimed. 'Is Dr. Thorndyke with him?'

'No, sir,' replied the grinning damsel. 'Dr. Thorndyke is hout.'

'Hout!' I repeated (my surprise leading to unintentional mimicry).

'Yes, sir. He went hout soon after you, sir, on his bicycle. He had a basket strapped on to it—least-

ways a namper—and he borrowed a basin and a kitchen-spoon from the cook.'

I stared at the girl in astonishment. The ways of John Thorndyke were, indeed, beyond all understanding.

'Well, let me have some dinner or supper at once,' I said, 'and I will see what the sergeant wants.'

The officer rose as I entered the surgery, and, laying his helmet on the table, approached me with an air of secrecy and importance.

'Well, sir,' said he, 'the fat's in the fire. I've arrested Mr. Draper, and I've got him locked up in the court-house. But I wish it had been some one else.'

'So does he, I expect,' I remarked.

'You see, sir,' continued the sergeant, 'we all like Mr. Draper. He's been among us a matter of seven years, and he's like one of ourselves. However, what I've come about is this; it seems the gentleman who was with you this evening is Dr. Thorndyke, the great expert. Now Mr. Draper seems to have heard about him, as most of us have, and he is very anxious for him to take up the defence. Do you think he would consent?'

'I expect so,' I answered, remembering Thorndyke's keen interest in the case; 'but I will ask him when he comes in.'

'Thank you, sir,' said the sergeant. 'And perhaps you wouldn't mind stepping round to the court-house presently yourself. He looks uncommon queer, does Mr. Draper, and no wonder, so I'd like you to take a look at him, and if you could bring Dr. Thorndyke with you, he'd like it, and so should I, for, I assure you, sir, that although a conviction

would mean a step up the ladder for me, I'd be glad enough to find that I'd made a mistake.'

I was just showing my visitor out when a bicycle swept in through the open gate, and Thorndyke dismounted at the door, revealing a square hamper—evidently abstracted from the surgery—strapped on to a carrier at the back. I conveyed the sergeant's request to him at once, and asked if he was willing to take up the case.

'As to taking up the defence,' he replied, 'I will consider the matter, but in any case I will come up and see the prisoner.'

With this the sergeant departed, and Thorndyke, having unstrapped the hamper with as much care as if it contained a collection of priceless porcelain, bore it tenderly up to his bedroom, whence he appeared, after a considerable interval, smilingly apologetic for the delay.

'I thought you were dressing for dinner,' I grumbled as he took his seat at the table.

'No,' he replied. 'I have been considering this murder. Really it is a most singular case, and promises to be uncommonly complicated, too.'

'Then I assume that you will undertake the defence?'

'I shall if Draper gives a reasonably straightforward account of himself.'

It appeared that this condition was likely to be fulfilled, for when we arrived at the court house (where the prisoner was accommodated in a spare office, under rather free and easy conditions considering the nature of the charge) we found Mr Draper in an eminently communicative frame of mind.

'I want you, Dr Thorndyke, to undertake my defence in this terrible affair, because I feel confident that you will be able to clear me. And I promise you that there shall be no reservation or concealment on my part of anything that you ought to know.'

'Very well,' said Thorndyke. 'By the way, I see you have changed your shoes.'

'Yes, the serpent took possession of those I was wearing. He said something about comparing them with some footprints, but there can't be any footprints like those shoes here in Sunderdey. The nails are fixed in the soles in quite a peculiar pattern. I had them made in Edinburgh.'

'Have you more than one pair?'

'No. I have no other nailed boots.'

'That is important,' said Thorndyke. 'And now I judge that you have something to tell us that bears on this crime. Am I right?'

'Yes. There is something that I am afraid it is necessary for you to know, although it is very painful to me to revive memories of my past that I had hoped were buried for ever. But perhaps, after all, it may not be necessary for these confidences to be revealed to any one but yourself.'

'I hope not,' said Thorndyke, 'and if it is not necessary you may rely upon me not to allow any of your secrets to leak out. But you are wise to tell me everything that may in any way bear upon the case.'

At this juncture, seeing that confidential matters were about to be discussed, I rose and prepared to withdraw, but Draper waved me back into my chair.

'You need not go away, Dr. Jervis,' he said. 'It is through you that I have the benefit of Dr. Thorndyke's help, and I know that you doctors can be trusted to keep your own counsel and your clients' secrets. And now for these confessions of mine. In the first place, it is my painful duty to tell you that I am a discharged convict—an "old lag", as the cant phrase has it.'

He coloured a dusky red as he made this statement, and glanced furtively at Thorndyke to observe its effect. But he might as well have looked at a wooden figure-head or a stone mask as at my friend's immovable visage; and when his communication had been acknowledged by a slight nod, he proceeded:

'The history of my wrong-doing is the history of hundreds of others. I was a clerk in a bank, and getting on as well as I could expect in that not very progressive avocation, when I had the misfortune to make four very undesirable acquaintances. They were all young men, though rather older than myself, and were close friends, forming a sort of little community or club. They were not what is usually described as "fast". They were quite sober and decently behaved young fellows, but they were very decidedly addicted to gambling in a small way, and they soon infected me. Before long I was the keenest gambler of them all. Cards, billiards, pool, and various forms of betting began to be the chief pleasures of my life, and not only was the bulk of my scanty salary often consumed in the inevitable losses, but presently I found myself considerably in debt, without any visible means of discharging my liabilities. It is true that my four friends were my

chief—in fact, almost my only—creditors, but still, the debts existed, and had to be paid.

'Now these four friends of mine—named respectively Leach, Pitford, Hearn, and Jezzard—were uncommonly clever men, though the full extent of their cleverness was not appreciated by me until too late. And I, too, was clever in my way, and a most undesirable way it was, for I possessed the fatal gift of imitating handwriting and signatures with the most remarkable accuracy. So perfect were my copies that the writers themselves were frequently unable to distinguish their own signatures from my imitations, and many a time was my skill invoked by some of my companions to play off practical jokes upon the others. But these jests were strictly confined to our own little set, for my four friends were most careful and anxious that my dangerous accomplishment should not become known to outsiders.

'And now follows the consequence which you have no doubt foreseen. My debts, though small, were accumulating, and I saw no prospect of being able to pay them. Then, one night, Jezzard made a proposition. We had been playing bridge at his rooms, and once more my ill luck had caused me to increase my debt. I scribbled out an I O U, and pushed it across the table to Jezzard, who picked it up with a very wry face, and pocketed it.

'"Look here, Ted," he said presently, "this paper is all very well, but, you know, I can't pay my debts with it. My creditors demand hard cash."

'"I'm very sorry," I replied, "but I can't help it."

'"Yes, you can," said he, "and I'll tell you how." He then propounded a scheme which I at first

rejected with indignation, but which, when the others backed him up, I at last allowed myself to be talked into, and actually put into execution. I contrived, by taking advantage of the carelessness of some of my superiors at the bank, to get possession of some blank cheque forms, which I filled up with small amounts—not more than two or three pounds—and signed with careful imitations of the signatures of some of our clients. Jezzard got some stamps made for stamping on the account numbers, and when this had been done I handed over to him the whole collection of forged cheques in settlement of my debts to all of my four companions.

'The cheques were duly presented—by whom I do not know; and although, to my dismay, the modest sums for which I had drawn them had been skilfully altered into quite considerable amounts, they were all paid without demur excepting one. That one, which had been altered from three pounds to thirty-nine, was drawn upon an account which was already slightly overdrawn. The cashier became suspicious; the cheque was impounded, and the client communicated with. Then, of course, the mine exploded. Not only was this particular forgery detected, but inquiries were set afoot which soon brought to light the others. Presently circumstances, which I need not describe, threw some suspicion on me. I at once lost my nerve, and finally made a full confession.

'The inevitable prosecution followed. It was not conducted vindictively. Still, I had actually committed the forgeries, and though I endeavoured to cast a part of the blame on to the shoulders of my treacherous confederates, I did not succeed. Jezzard

it is true, was arrested, but was discharged for lack of evidence, and, consequently, the whole burden of the forgery fell upon me. The jury, of course, convicted me, and I was sentenced to seven years' penal servitude.

'During the time that I was in prison an uncle of mine died in Canada, and by the provisions of his will I inherited the whole of his very considerable property, so that when the time arrived for my release, I came out of prison, not only free, but comparatively rich. I at once dropped my own name, and, assuming that of Alfred Draper, began to look about for some quiet spot in which I might spend the rest of my days in peace, and with little chance of my identity being discovered. Such a place I found in Sundersley, and here I have lived for the last seven years, liked and respected, I think, by my neighbours, who have little suspected that they were harbouring in their midst a convicted felon.

'All this time I had neither seen nor heard anything of my four confederates, and I hoped and believed that they had passed completely out of my life. But they had not. Only a month ago I met them once more, to my sorrow, and from the day of that meeting all the peace and security of my quiet existence at Sundersley have vanished. Like evil spirits they have stolen into my life, changing my happiness into bitter misery, filling my days with dark forebodings and my nights with terror.'

Here Mr. Draper paused, and seemed to sink into a gloomy reverie.

'Under what circumstances did you meet these men?' Thorndyke asked.

'Ah!' exclaimed Draper, arousing with sudden excitement, 'the circumstances were very singular and suspicious. I had gone over to Eastwich for the day to do some shopping. About eleven o'clock in the forenoon I was making some purchases in a shop when I noticed two men looking in the window, or rather pretending to do so, whilst they conversed earnestly. They were smartly dressed, in a horsy fashion, and looked like well-to-do farmers, as they might very naturally have been since it was market-day. But it seemed to me that their faces were familiar to me. I looked at them more attentively, and then it suddenly dawned upon me, most unpleasantly, that they resembled Leach and Jezzard. And yet they were not quite like. The resemblance was there, but the differences were greater than the lapse of time would account for. Moreover, the man who resembled Jezzard had a rather large mole on the left cheek just under the eye, while the other man had an eyeglass stuck in one eye, and wore a waxed moustache, whereas Leach had always been clean-shaven, and had never used an eye-glass.

'As I was speculating upon the resemblance they looked up, and caught my intent and inquisitive eye, whereupon they moved away from the window; and when, having completed my purchases, I came out into the street, they were nowhere to be seen.

'That evening, as I was walking by the river outside the town before returning to the station, I overtook a yacht which was being towed downstream. Three men were walking ahead on the bank with a long tow-line, and one man stood in the cockpit steering. As I approached, and was reading the name *Otter* on the stern, the man at the helm

looked round, and with a start of surprise I recognized my old acquaintance Hearn. The recognition, however, was not mutual, for I had grown a beard in the interval, and I passed on without appearing to notice him; but when I overtook the other three men, and recognized, as I had feared, the other three members of the gang, I must have looked rather hard at Jezzard, for he suddenly halted, and exclaimed: "Why, it 's our old friend Ted! Our long-lost and lamented brother!" He held out his hand with effusive cordiality, and began to make inquiries as to my welfare; but I cut him short with the remark that I was not proposing to renew the acquaintance, and, turning off on to a footpath that led away from the river, strode off without looking back.

'Naturally this meeting exercised my mind a good deal, and when I thought of the two men whom I had seen in the town, I could hardly believe that their likeness to my quondam friends was a mere coincidence. And yet when I had met Leach and Jezzard by the river, I had found them little altered, and had particularly noticed that Jezzard had no mole on his face, and that Leach was clean-shaven as of old.

'But a day or two later all my doubts were resolved by a paragraph in the local paper. It appeared that on the day of my visit to Eastwich a number of forged cheques had been cashed at the three banks. They had been presented by three well-dressed, horsy-looking men who looked like well-to-do farmers. One of them had a mole on the left cheek, another was distinguished by a waxed moustache and a single eyeglass, while the descrip-

tion of the third I did not recognize. None of the cheques had been drawn for large amounts, though the total sum obtained by the forgers was nearly four hundred pounds; but the most interesting point was that the cheque forms had been manufactured by photographic process, and the watermark skilfully, though not quite perfectly, imitated. Evidently the swindlers were clever and careful men, and willing to take a good deal of trouble for the sake of security, and the result of their precautions was that the police could make no guess as to their identity.

"The very next day, happening to walk over to Port Marston, I came upon the *Otter* lying moored alongside the quay in the harbour. As soon as I recognized the yacht, I turned quickly and walked away, but a minute later I ran into Leach and Jezzard, who were returning to their craft. Jezzard greeted me with an air of surprise, "What! Still hanging about here, Ted!" he exclaimed. "That is not discreet of you, dear boy. I should earnestly advise you to clear out."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Tut, tut!" said he. "We read the papers like other people, and we know now what business took you to Eastwich. But it's foolish of you to hang about the neighbourhood where you might be spotted at any moment."

"The implied accusation took me aback so completely that I stood staring at him in speechless astonishment, and at that unlucky moment a tradesman, from whom I had ordered some household linen, passed along the quay. Seeing me, he stopped and touched his hat.

"'Beg pardon, Mr. Draper,' said he, 'but I shall be sending my cart up to Sundersley to-morrow morning if that will do for you.'

"I said that it would, and as the man turned away, Jezzard's face broke out into a cunning smile.

"'So you are Mr Draper, of Sundersley, now, are you?' said he. 'Well, I hope you won't be too proud to come and look in on your old friends. We shall be staying here for some time.'

"That same night Hearn made his appearance at my house. He had come as an emissary from the gang, to ask me to do some work for them—to execute some forgeries, in fact. Of course I refused, and pretty bluntly, too, whereupon Hearn began to throw out vague hints as to what might happen if I made enemies of the gang, and to utter veiled, but quite intelligible, threats. You will say that I was an idiot not to send him packing, and threaten to hand over the whole gang to the police, but I was never a man of strong nerve, and I don't mind admitting that I was mortally afraid of that cunning devil, Jezzard.

"The next thing that happened was that Hearn came and took lodgings in Sundersley, and, in spite of my efforts to avoid him, he haunted me continually. The yacht, too, had evidently settled down for some time at a berth in the harbour, for I heard that a local smack boy had been engaged as a deck hand; and I frequently encountered Jezzard and the other members of the gang, who all professed to believe that I had committed the Eastwich forgeries. One day I was foolish enough to allow myself to be lured on to the yacht for a few minutes, and when I would have gone ashore, I found that

the shore ropes had been cast off, and that the vessel was already moving out of the harbour. At first I was furious, but the three scoundrels were so jovial and good-natured, and so delighted with the joke of taking me for a sail against my will, that I presently cooled down, and having changed into a pair of rubber-soled shoes (so that I should not make dents in the smooth deck with my hobnails), bore a hand at sailing the yacht, and spent quite a pleasant day.

'From that time I found myself gradually drifting back into a state of intimacy with these agreeable scoundrels, and daily becoming more and more afraid of them. In a moment of imbecility I mentioned what I had seen from the shop-window at Eastwich, and, though they passed the matter off with a joke, I could see that they were mightily disturbed by it. Their efforts to induce me to join them were redoubled, and Hearn took to calling almost daily at my house—usually with documents and signatures which he tried to persuade me to copy.

'A few evenings ago he made a new and startling proposition. We were walking in my garden, and he had been urging me once more to rejoin the gang—unsuccessfully, I need not say. Presently he sat down on a seat against a yew-hedge at the bottom of the garden, and, after an interval of silence, said suddenly:

'"Then you absolutely refuse to go in with us?"

'"Of course I do," I replied. "Why should I mix myself up with a gang of crooks when I have ample means and a decent position?"

'"Of course," he agreed, "you'd be a fool if you

did. But, you see, you know all about this Eastwich job, to say nothing of our other little exploits, and you gave us away once before. Consequently, you can take it from me that, now Jezzard has run you to earth, he won't leave you in peace until you have given us some kind of a hold on you. You know too much, you see, and as long as you have a clean sheet you are a standing menace to us. That is the position. You know it, and Jezzard knows it, and he is a desperate man, and as cunning as the devil."

"'I know that," I said gloomily.

"'Very well," continued Hearn. "Now I'm going to make you an offer. Promise me a small annuity—you can easily afford it—or pay me a substantial sum down, and I will set you free for ever from Jezzard and the others."

"'How will you do that?" I asked.

"'Very simply," he replied. "I am sick of them all, and sick of this risky, uncertain mode of life. Now I am ready to clean off my own slate and set you free at the same time; but I must have some means of livelihood in view."

"'You mean that you will turn King's evidence?" I asked.

"'Yes, if you will pay me a couple of hundred a year, or, say, two thousand down on the conviction of the gang."

I was so taken aback that for some time I made no reply, and as I sat considering this amazing proposition, the silence was suddenly broken by a suppressed sneeze from the other side of the hedge.

Hearn and I started to our feet. Immediately hurried footsteps were heard in the lane outside the

hedge. We raced up the garden to the gate and out through a side alley, but when we reached the lane there was not a soul in sight. We made a brief and fruitless search in the immediate neighbourhood, and then turned back to the house. Hearn was deathly pale and very agitated, and I must confess that I was a good deal upset by the incident.

'"This is devilish awkward," said Hearn.

'"It is rather," I admitted; "but I expect it was only some inquisitive yokel."

'"I don't feel so sure of that," said he. "At any rate, we were stark lunatics to sit up against a hedge to talk secrets."

'He paced the garden with me for some time in gloomy silence, and presently, after a brief request that I would think over his proposal, took himself off.

'I did not see him again until I met him last night on the yacht. Pitford called on me in the morning, and invited me to come and dine with them. I at first declined, for my housekeeper was going to spend the evening with her sister at Eastwich, and stay there for the night, and I did not much like leaving the house empty. However, I agreed eventually, stipulating that I should be allowed to come home early, and I accordingly went. Hearn and Pitford were waiting in the boat by the steps—for the yacht had been moved out to a buoy—and we went on board and spent a very pleasant and lively evening. Pitford put me ashore at ten o'clock, and I walked straight home, and went to bed. Hearn would have come with me, but the others insisted on his remaining, saying that they had some matters of business to discuss.'

'Which way did you walk home?' asked Thorndyke.

'I came through the town, and along the main road.'

'And that is all you know about this affair?'

'Absolutely all,' replied Draper. 'I have now admitted you to secrets of my past life that I had hoped never to have to reveal to any human creature, and I still have some faint hope that it may not be necessary for you to divulge what I have told you.'

'Your secrets shall not be revealed unless it is absolutely indispensable that they should be,' said Thorndyke; 'but you are placing your life in my hands, and you must leave me perfectly free to act as I think best.'

With this he gathered his notes together, and we took our departure.

'A very singular history, this, Jervis,' he said, when, having wished the sergeant 'Good-night', we stepped out on to the dark road. 'What do you think of it?'

'I hardly know what to think,' I answered, 'but, on the whole, it seems rather against Draper than otherwise. He admits that he is an old criminal, and it appears that he was being persecuted and blackmailed by the man Hearn. It is true that he represents Jezzard as being the leading spirit and prime mover in the persecution, but we have only his word for that. Hearn was in lodgings near him, and was undoubtedly taking the most active part in the business, and it is quite possible, and indeed probable, that Hearn was the actual *deus ex machina*.'

Thorndyke nodded. 'Yes,' he said, 'that is certainly the line the prosecution will take if we allow the story to become known. Ha! what is this? We are going to have some rain.'

'Yes, and wind too. We are in for an autumn gale, I think.'

'And that,' said Thorndyke, 'may turn out to be an important factor in our case.'

'How can the weather affect your case?' I asked in some surprise. But, as the rain suddenly descended in a pelting shower, my companion broke into a run, leaving my question unanswered.

On the following morning, which was fair and sunny after the stormy night, Dr. Burrows called for my friend. He was on his way to the extemporized mortuary to make the *post-mortem* examination of the murdered man's body. Thorndyke, having notified the coroner that he was watching the case on behalf of the accused, had been authorized to be present at the autopsy; but the authorization did not include me, and, as Dr. Burrows did not issue any invitation, I was not able to be present. I met them, however, as they were returning, and it seemed to me that Dr. Burrows appeared a little huffy.

'Your friend,' said he, in a rather injured tone, 'is really the most outrageous stickler for forms and ceremonies that I have ever met.'

Thorndyke looked at him with an amused twinkle, and chuckled indulgently.

'Here was a body,' Dr. Burrows continued irritably, 'found under circumstances clearly indicative of murder, and bearing a knife-wound that nearly divided the arch of the aorta; in spite of

which, I assure you that Dr. Thorndyke insisted on weighing the body, and examining every organ—lungs, liver, stomach, and brain—yes, actually the brain!—as if there had been no clue whatever to the cause of death. And then, as a climax, he insisted on sending the contents of the stomach in a jar, sealed with our respective seals, in charge of a special messenger, to Professor Copland, for analysis and report. I thought he was going to demand an examination for the tubercle bacillus, but he didn't; which,' concluded Dr. Burrows, suddenly becoming sourly facetious, 'was an oversight, for, after all, the fellow may have died of consumption.'

Thorndyke chuckled again, and I murmured that the precautions appeared to have been somewhat excessive.

'Not at all,' was the smiling response. 'You are losing sight of our function. We are the expert and impartial umpires, and it is our business to ascertain, with scientific accuracy, the cause of death. The *prima facie* appearances in this case suggest that the deceased was murdered by Draper, and that is the hypothesis advanced. But that is no concern of ours. It is not our function to confirm an hypothesis suggested by outside circumstances, but rather, on the contrary, to make certain that no other explanation is possible. And that is my invariable practice. No matter how glaringly obvious the appearances may be, I refuse to take anything for granted.'

Dr. Burrows received this statement with a grunt of dissent, but the arrival of his dog-cart put a stop to further discussion.

Thorndyke was not subpœnaed for the inquest.

Dr. Burrows and the sergeant having been present immediately after the finding of the body, his evidence was not considered necessary, and, moreover, he was known to be watching the case in the interests of the accused. Like myself, therefore, he was present as a spectator, but as a highly interested one, for he took very complete short-hand notes of the whole of the evidence and the coroner's comments.

I shall not describe the proceedings in detail. The jury, having been taken to view the body, trooped into the room on tiptoe, looking pale and awe-stricken, and took their seats; and thereafter, from time to time, directed glances of furtive curiosity at Draper as he stood, pallid and haggard, confronting the court, with a burly rural constable on either side.

The medical evidence was taken first. Dr. Burrows, having been sworn, began, with sarcastic emphasis, to describe the condition of the lungs and liver, until he was interrupted by the coroner.

'Is all this necessary?' the latter inquired. 'I mean, is it material to the subject of the inquiry?'

'I should say not,' replied Dr. Burrows. 'It appears to me to be quite irrelevant, but Dr. Thorndyke, who is watching the case for the defence, thought it necessary.'

'I think,' said the coroner, 'you had better give us only the facts that are material. The jury want you to tell them what you consider to have been the cause of death. They don't want a lecture on pathology.'

'The cause of death,' said Dr. Burrows, 'was a penetrating wound of the chest, apparently inflicted

with a large knife. The weapon entered between the second and third ribs on the left side close to the sternum or breast-bone. It wounded the left lung, and partially divided both the pulmonary artery and the aorta—the two principal arteries of the body.'

'Was this injury alone sufficient to cause death?' the coroner asked.

'Yes,' was the reply; 'and death from injury to these great vessels would be practically instantaneous.'

'Could the injury have been self-inflicted?'

'So far as the position and nature of the wound are concerned,' replied the witness, 'self-infliction would be quite possible. But since death would follow in a few seconds at the most, the weapon would be found either in the wound, or grasped in the hand, or, at least, quite close to the body. But in this case no weapon was found at all, and the wound must therefore certainly have been homicidal.'

'Did you see the body before it was moved?'

'Yes. It was lying on its back, with the arms extended and the legs nearly straight; and the sand in the neighbourhood of the body was trampled as if a furious struggle had taken place.'

'Did you notice anything remarkable about the footprints in the sand?'

'I did,' replied Dr. Burrows. 'They were the footprints of two persons only. One of these was evidently the deceased, whose footmarks could be easily identified by the circular rubber heels. The other footprints were those of a person—apparently a man—who wore shoes, or boots, the soles of which were studded with nails; and these nails were

arranged in a very peculiar and unusual manner, for those on the soles formed a lozenge or diamond shape, and those on the heel were set out in the form of a cross.'

'Have you ever seen shoes or boots with the nails arranged in this manner?'

'Yes. I have seen a pair of shoes which I am informed belong to the accused; the nails in them are arranged as I have described.'

'Would you say that the footprints of which you have spoken were made by those shoes?'

'No; I could not say that. I can only say that, to the best of my belief, the pattern on the shoes is similar to that in the footprints.'

This was the sum of Dr. Burrows' evidence, and to all of it Thorndyke listened with an immovable countenance, though with the closest attention. Equally attentive was the accused man, though not equally impassive; indeed, so great was his agitation that presently one of the constables asked permission to get him a chair.

The next witness was Arthur Jezzard. He testified that he had viewed the body, and identified it as that of Charles Hearn; that he had been acquainted with deceased for some years, but knew practically nothing of his affairs. At the time of his death deceased was lodging in the village.

'Why did he leave the yacht?' the coroner inquired. 'Was there any kind of disagreement?'

'Not in the least,' replied Jezzard. 'He grew tired of the confinement of the yacht, and came to live ashore for a change. But we were the best of friends, and he intended to come with us when we sailed.'

'When did you see him last?'

'On the night before the body was found—that is, last Monday. He had been dining on the yacht, and we put him ashore about midnight. He said as we were rowing him ashore that he intended to walk home along the sands as the tide was out. He went up the stone steps by the watch-house, and turned at the top to wish us good-night. That was the last time I saw him alive.'

'Do you know anything of the relations between the accused and the deceased?' the coroner asked.

'Very little,' replied Jezzard. 'Mr. Draper was introduced to us by the deceased about a month ago. I believe they had been acquainted some years, and they appeared to be on excellent terms. There was no indication of any quarrel or disagreement between them.'

'What time did the accused leave the yacht on the night of the murder?'

'About ten o'clock. He said that he wanted to get home early, as his housekeeper was away and he did not like the house to be left with no one in it.'

This was the whole of Jezzard's evidence, and was confirmed by that of Leach and Pitford. Then, when the fisherman had deposed to the discovery of the body, the sergeant was called, and stepped forward, grasping a carpet-bag, and looking as uncomfortable as if he had been the accused instead of a witness. He described the circumstances under which he saw the body, giving the exact time and place with official precision.

'You have heard Dr. Burrows' description of the footprints?' the coroner inquired.

'Yes. There were two sets. One set were evi-

dently made by deceased. They showed that he entered St. Bridget's Bay from the direction of Port Marston. He had been walking along the shore just about high-water mark, sometimes above and sometimes below. Where he had walked below high-water mark the footprints had of course been washed away by the sea.'

'How far back did you trace the footprints of deceased?'

'About two-thirds of the way to Sundersley Gap. Then they disappeared below high-water mark. Later in the evening I walked from the Gap into Port Marston, but could not find any further traces of deceased. He must have walked between the tide-marks all the way from Port Marston to beyond Sundersley. When these footprints entered St. Bridget's Bay they became mixed up with the footprints of another man, and the shore was trampled for a space of a dozen yards as if a furious struggle had taken place. The strange man's tracks came down from the Shepherd's Path, and went up it again; but, owing to the hardness of the ground from the dry weather, the tracks disappeared a short distance up the path, and I could not find them again.'

'What were these strange footprints like?' inquired the coroner.

'They were very peculiar,' replied the sergeant. 'They were made by shoes armed with smallish hobnails, which were arranged in a diamond-shaped pattern on the soles and in a cross on the heels. I measured the footprints carefully, and made a drawing of each foot at the time.' Here the sergeant produced a long note-book of funereal aspect,

and, having opened it at a marked place, handed it to the coroner, who examined it attentively, and then passed it on to the jury. From the jury it was presently transferred to Thorndyke, and, looking over his shoulder, I saw a very workmanlike sketch of a pair of footprints with the principal dimensions inserted.

Thorndyke surveyed the drawing critically, jotted down a few brief notes, and returned the sergeant's note-book to the coroner, who, as he took it, turned once more to the officer.

'Have you any clue, sergeant, to the person who made these footprints?' he asked.

By way of reply the sergeant opened his carpet-bag, and, extracting therefrom a pair of smart but stoutly made shoes, laid them on the table.

'These shoes,' he said, 'are the property of the accused; he was wearing them when I arrested him. They appear to correspond exactly to the footprints of the murderer. The measurements are the same, and the nails with which they are studded are arranged in a similar pattern.'

'Would you swear that the footprints were made with these shoes?' asked the coroner.

'No, sir, I would not,' was the decided answer. 'I would only swear to the similarity of size and pattern.'

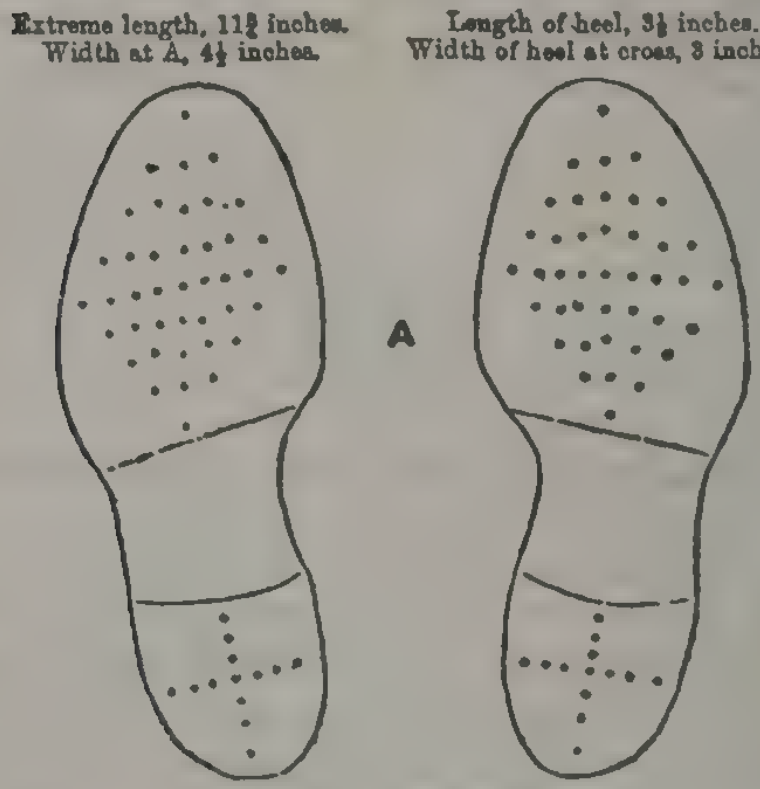
'Had you ever seen these shoes before you made the drawing?'

'No, sir,' replied the sergeant; and he then related the incident of the footprints in the soft earth by the pond which led him to make the arrest.

The coroner gazed reflectively at the shoes which he held in his hand, and from them to the drawing;

then, passing them to the foreman of the jury, he remarked:

'Well, gentlemen, it is not for me to tell you



THE SERGEANT'S SKETCH.

whether these shoes answer to the description given by Dr. Burrows and the sergeant, or whether they resemble the drawing which, as you have heard, was made by the officer on the spot and before he had seen the shoes; that is a matter for you to decide. Meanwhile, there is another question that we must consider.' He turned to the sergeant and asked: 'Have you made any inquiries as to the movements of the accused on the night of the murder?'

'I have,' replied the sergeant, 'and I find that, on that night, the accused was alone in the house, his housekeeper having gone over to Eastwich. Two

men saw him in the town about ten o'clock, apparently walking in the direction of Sundersley.'

This concluded the sergeant's evidence, and when one or two more witnesses had been examined without eliciting any fresh facts, the coroner briefly recapitulated the evidence, and requested the jury to consider their verdict. Thereupon a solemn hush fell upon the court, broken only by the whispers of the jurymen, as they consulted together; and the spectators gazed in awed expectancy from the accused to the whispering jury. I glanced at Draper, sitting huddled in his chair, his clammy face as pale as that of the corpse in the mortuary hard by, his hands tremulous and restless; and, scoundrel as I believed him to be, I could not but pity the abject misery that was written large all over him, from his damp hair to his incessantly shifting feet.

The jury took but a short time to consider their verdict. At the end of five minutes the foreman announced that they were agreed, and, in answer to the coroner's formal inquiry, stood up and replied: 'We find that the deceased met his death by being stabbed in the chest by the accused man, Alfred Draper.'

'That is a verdict of wilful murder,' said the coroner, and he entered it accordingly in his notes. The Court now rose. The spectators reluctantly trooped out, the jurymen stood up and stretched themselves, and the two constables, under the guidance of the sergeant, carried the wretched Draper in a fainting condition to a closed fly that was waiting outside.

'I was not greatly impressed by the activity of the defence,' I remarked maliciously as we walked home.

Thorndyke smiled. 'You surely did not expect me to cast my pearls of forensic learning before a coroner's jury,' said he.

'I expected that you would have something to say on behalf of your client,' I replied. 'As it was, his accusers had it all their own way.'

'And why not?' he asked. 'Of what concern to us is the verdict of the coroner's jury?'

'It would have seemed more decent to make some sort of defence,' I replied.

'My dear Jervis,' he rejoined, 'you do not seem to appreciate the great virtue of what Lord Beaconsfield so felicitously called "a policy of masterly inactivity"; and yet that is one of the great lessons that a medical training impresses on the student.'

'That may be so,' said I. 'But the result, up to the present, of your masterly policy is that a verdict of wilful murder stands against your client, and I don't see what other verdict the jury could have found.'

'Neither do I,' said Thorndyke.

I had written to my principal, Dr. Cooper, describing the stirring events that were taking place in the village, and had received a reply from him instructing me to place the house at Thorndyke's disposal, and to give him every facility for his work. In accordance with which edict my colleague took possession of a well-lighted, disused stable-loft, and announced his intention of moving his things into it. Now, as these 'things' included the mysterious contents of the hamper that the housemaid had seen, I was possessed with a consuming desire to be present at the 'flitting', and I do not mind confessing that I purposely lurked about the stairs in the

hopes of thus picking up a few crumbs of information.

But Thorndyke was one too many for me. A misbegotten infant in the village having been seized with inopportune convulsions, I was compelled, most reluctantly, to hasten to its relief; and I returned only in time to find Thorndyke in the act of locking the door of the loft.

'A nice light, roomy place to work in,' he remarked, as he descended the steps, slipping the key into his pocket.

'Yes,' I replied, and added boldly: 'What do you intend to do up there?'

'Work up the case for the defence,' he replied, 'and, as I have now heard all that the prosecution have to say, I shall be able to forge ahead.'

This was vague enough, but I consoled myself with the reflection that in a very few days I should, in common with the rest of the world, be in possession of the results of his mysterious proceedings. For, in view of the approaching assizes, preparations were being made to push the case through the magistrate's court as quickly as possible in order to obtain a committal in time for the ensuing sessions. Draper had, of course, been already charged before a justice of the peace and evidence of arrest taken, and it was expected that the adjourned hearing would commence before the local magistrates on the fifth day after the inquest.

The events of these five days kept me in a positive ferment of curiosity. In the first place an inspector of the Criminal Investigation Department came down and browsed about the place in company with the sergeant. Then Mr. Bashfield, who was to con-

duct the prosecution, came and took up his abode at the 'Cat and Chicken'. But the most surprising visitor was Thorndyke's laboratory assistant, Polton, who appeared one evening with a large trunk and a sailor's hammock, and announced that he was going to take up his quarters in the loft.

As to Thorndyke himself, his proceedings were beyond speculation. From time to time he made mysterious appearances at the windows of the loft, usually arrayed in what looked suspiciously like a night-shirt. Sometimes I would see him holding a negative up to the light, at others manipulating a photographic printing-frame; and once I observed him with a paint-brush and a large gallipot; on which I turned away in despair, and nearly collided with the inspector.

'Dr. Thorndyke is staying with you, I hear,' said the latter, gazing earnestly at my colleague's back, which was presented for his inspection at the window.

'Yes,' I answered. 'Those are his temporary premises.'

'That is where he does his bedevilments, I suppose?' the officer suggested.

'He conducts his experiments there,' I corrected haughtily.

'That's what I mean,' said the inspector; and, as Thorndyke at this moment turned and opened the window, our visitor began to ascend the steps.

'I've just called to ask if I could have a few words with you, Doctor,' said the inspector, as he reached the door.

'Certainly,' Thorndyke replied blandly. 'If you will go down and wait with Dr. Jervis, I will be with you in five minutes.'

The officer came down the steps grinning, and I thought I heard him murmur 'Sold!' But this may have been an illusion. However, Thorndyke presently emerged, and he and the officer strode away into the shrubbery. What the inspector's business was, or whether he had any business at all, I never learned; but the incident seemed to throw some light on the presence of Polton and the sailor's hammock. And this reference to Polton reminds me of a very singular change that took place about this time in the habits of this usually staid and sedate little man; who, abandoning the somewhat clerical style of dress that he ordinarily affected, broke out into a semi-nautical costume, in which he would sally forth every morning in the direction of Port Marston. And there, on more than one occasion, I saw him leaning against a post by the harbour, or lounging outside a waterside tavern in earnest and amicable conversation with sundry nautical characters.

On the afternoon of the day before the opening of the proceedings we had two new visitors. One of them, a grey-haired spectacled man, was a stranger to me, and for some reason I failed to recall his name, Copland, though I was sure I had heard it before. The other was Anstey, the barrister who usually worked with Thorndyke in cases that went into Court. I saw very little of either of them, however, for they retired almost immediately to the loft, where, with short intervals for meals, they remained for the rest of the day, and, I believe, far into the night. Thorndyke requested me not to mention the names of his visitors to any one, and at the same time apologized for the secrecy of his proceedings.

'But you are a doctor, Jervis,' he concluded, 'and you know what professional confidences are; and you will understand how greatly it is in our favour that we know exactly what the prosecution can do, while they are absolutely in the dark as to our line of defence.'

I assured him that I fully understood his position, and with this assurance he retired, evidently relieved, to the council chamber.

The proceedings, which opened on the following day, and at which I was present throughout, need not be described in detail. The evidence for the prosecution was, of course, mainly a repetition of that given at the inquest. Mr. Bashfield's opening statement, however, I shall give at length, inasmuch as it summarized very clearly the whole of the case against the prisoner.

'The case that is now before the Court,' said the counsel, 'involves a charge of wilful murder against the prisoner Alfred Draper, and the facts, in so far as they are known, are briefly these: On the night of Monday, the 27th of September, the deceased, Charles Hearn, dined with some friends on board the yacht *Otter*. About midnight he came ashore, and proceeded to walk towards Sundersley along the beach. As he entered St. Bridget's Bay, a man, who appears to have been lying in wait, and who came down the Shepherd's Path, met him, and a deadly struggle seems to have taken place. The deceased received a wound of a kind calculated to cause almost instantaneous death, and apparently fell down dead.

'And now, what was the motive of this terrible crime? It was not robbery, for nothing appears to

have been taken from the corpse. Money and valuables were found, as far as is known, intact. Nor, clearly, was it a case of a casual affray. We are, consequently, driven to the conclusion that the motive was a personal one, a motive of interest or revenge, and with this view the time, the place, and the evident deliberateness of the murder are in full agreement.

'So much for the motive. The next question is, Who was the perpetrator of this shocking crime? And the answer to that question is given in a very singular and dramatic circumstance, a circumstance that illustrates once more the amazing lack of precaution shown by persons who commit such crimes. The murderer was wearing a very remarkable pair of shoes, and those shoes left very remarkable footprints in the smooth sand, and those footprints were seen and examined by a very acute and painstaking police-officer, Sergeant Payne, whose evidence you will hear presently. The sergeant not only examined the footprints, he made careful drawings of them on the spot—on the spot, mind you, not from memory—and he made very exact measurements of them, which he duly noted down. And from those drawings and those measurements, those telltale shoes have been identified, and are here for your inspection.

'And now, who is the owner of those very singular, those almost unique shoes? I have said that the motive of this murder must have been a personal one, and, behold! the owner of those shoes happens to be the one person in the whole of this district who could have had a motive for compassing the murdered man's death. Those shoes belong to, and

were taken from the feet of, the prisoner, Alfred Draper, and the prisoner, Alfred Draper, is the only person living in this neighbourhood who was acquainted with the deceased.

'It has been stated in evidence at the inquest that the relations of these two men, the prisoner and the deceased, were entirely friendly; but I shall prove to you that they were not so friendly as has been supposed. I shall prove to you, by the evidence of the prisoner's housekeeper, that the deceased was often an unwelcome visitor at the house, that the prisoner often denied himself when he was really at home and disengaged, and, in short, that he appeared constantly to shun and avoid the deceased.

'One more question and I have finished. Where was the prisoner on the night of the murder? The answer is that he was in a house little more than half a mile from the scene of the crime. And who was with him in that house? Who was there to observe and testify to his going forth and his coming home? No one. He was alone in the house. On that night, of all nights, he was alone. Not a soul was there to rouse at the creak of a door or the tread of a shoe—to tell us whether he slept or whether he stole forth in the dead of the night.

'Such are the facts of this case. I believe that they are not disputed, and I assert that, taken together, they are susceptible of only one explanation, which is that the prisoner, Alfred Draper, is the man who murdered the deceased, Charles Hearn.'

Immediately on the conclusion of this address, the witnesses were called, and the evidence given was identical with that at the inquest. The only new witness for the prosecution was Draper's house-

keeper, and her evidence fully bore out Mr. Bashfield's statement. The sergeant's account of the footprints was listened to with breathless interest, and at its conclusion the presiding magistrate—a retired solicitor, once well known in criminal practice—put a question which interested me as showing how clearly Thorndyke had foreseen the course of events, recalling, as it did, his remark on the night when we were caught in the rain.

'Did you,' the magistrate asked, 'take these shoes down to the beach and compare them with the actual footprints?'

'I obtained the shoes at night,' replied the sergeant, 'and I took them down to the shore at day break the next morning. But, unfortunately, there had been a storm in the night, and the footprints were almost obliterated by the wind and rain.'

When the sergeant had stepped down, Mr. Bashfield announced that that was the case for the prosecution. He then resumed his seat, turning an inquisitive eye on Anstey and Thorndyke.

The former immediately rose and opened the case for the defence with a brief statement.

'The learned counsel for the prosecution,' said he, 'has told us that the facts now in the possession of the Court admit of but one explanation—that of the guilt of the accused. That may or may not be; but I shall now proceed to lay before the Court certain fresh facts—facts, I may say, of the most singular and startling character, which will, I think, lead to a very different conclusion. I shall say no more, but call the witnesses forthwith, and let the evidence speak for itself.'

The first witness for the defence was Thorndyke;

and as he entered the box I observed Polton take up a position close behind him with a large wicker trunk. Having been sworn, and requested by Anstey to tell the Court what he knew about the case, he commenced without preamble:

'About half-past four in the afternoon of the 28th of September I walked down Sundersley Gap with Dr. Jervis. Our attention was attracted by certain footprints in the sand, particularly those of a man who had landed from a boat, had walked up the Gap, and presently returned, apparently to the boat.

'As we were standing there Sergeant Payne and Dr. Burrows passed down the Gap with two constables carrying a stretcher. We followed at a distance, and as we walked along the shore we encountered another set of footprints—those which the sergeant has described as the footprints of the deceased. We examined these carefully, and endeavoured to frame a description of the person by whom they had been made.'

'And did your description agree with the characters of the deceased?' the magistrate asked.

'Not in the least,' replied Thorndyke, whereupon the magistrate, the inspector, and Mr. Bashfield laughed long and heartily.

'When we turned into St. Bridget's Bay, I saw the body of deceased lying on the sand close to the cliff. The sand all round was covered with footprints, as if a prolonged, fierce struggle had taken place. There were two sets of footprints, one set being apparently those of the deceased and the other those of a man with nailed shoes of a very peculiar and conspicuous pattern. The incredible

folly that the wearing of such shoes indicated caused me to look more closely at the footprints, and then I made the surprising discovery that there had in reality been no struggle; that, in fact, the two sets of footprints had been made at different times.'

'At different times!' the magistrate exclaimed in astonishment.

'Yes. The interval between them may have been one of hours or one only of seconds, but the undoubted fact is that the two sets of footprints were made, not simultaneously, but in succession.'

'But how did you arrive at that fact?' the magistrate asked.

'It was very obvious when one looked,' said Thorndyke. 'The marks of the deceased man's shoes showed that he repeatedly trod in his own footprints; but never in a single instance did he tread in the footprints of the other man, although they covered the same area. The man with the nailed shoes, on the contrary, not only trod in his own footprints, but with equal frequency in those of the deceased. Moreover, when the body was removed, I observed that the footprints in the sand on which it was lying were exclusively those of the deceased. There was not a sign of any nail-marked footprint under the corpse, although there were many close around it. It was evident, therefore, that the footprints of the deceased were made first and those of the nailed shoes afterwards.'

As Thorndyke paused the magistrate rubbed his nose thoughtfully, and the inspector gazed at the witness with a puzzled frown.

'The singularity of this fact,' my colleague

resumed, 'made me look at the footprints yet more critically, and then I made another discovery. There was a double track of the nailed shoes, leading apparently from and back to the Shepherd's Path. But on examining these tracks more closely, I was astonished to find that the man who had made them had been walking backwards; that, in fact, he had walked backwards from the body to the Shepherd's Path, had ascended it for a short distance, had turned round, and returned, still walking backwards, to the face of the cliff near the corpse, and there the tracks vanished altogether. On the sand at this spot were some small, inconspicuous marks which might have been made by the end of a rope, and there were also a few small fragments which had fallen from the cliff above. Observing these, I examined the surface of the cliff, and at one spot, about six feet above the beach, I found a freshly rubbed spot on which were parallel scratches such as might have been made by the nailed sole of a boot. I then ascended the Shepherd's Path, and examined the cliff from above, and here I found on the extreme edge a rather deep indentation, such as would be made by a taut rope, and, on lying down and looking over, I could see, some five feet from the top, another rubbed spot with very distinct parallel scratches.'

'You appear to infer,' said the chairman, 'that this man performed these astonishing evolutions and was then hauled up the cliff?'

'That is what the appearances suggested,' replied Thorndyke.

The chairman pursed up his lips, raised his eyebrows, and glanced doubtfully at his brother magis-

trates. Then, with a resigned air, he bowed to the witness to indicate that he was listening.

'That same night,' Thorndyke resumed, 'I cycled down to the shore, through the Gap, with a supply of plaster of Paris, and proceeded to take plaster moulds of the more important of the footprints.' (Here the magistrates, the inspector, and Mr. Bashfield with one accord sat up at attention; Sergeant Payne swore quite audibly; and I experienced a sudden illumination respecting a certain basin and kitchen spoon which had so puzzled me on the night of Thorndyke's arrival.) 'As I thought that liquid plaster might confuse or even obliterate the prints in sand, I filled up the respective footprints with dry plaster, pressed it down lightly, and then cautiously poured water on to it. The moulds, which are excellent impressions, of course show the appearance of the boots which made the footprints, and from these moulds I have prepared casts which reproduce the footprints themselves.

'The first mould that I made was that of one of the tracks from the boat up to the Gap, and of this I shall speak presently. I next made a mould of one of the footprints which have been described as those of the deceased.'

'Have been described!' exclaimed the chairman. 'The deceased was certainly there, and there were no other footprints, so, if they were not his, he must have flown to where he was found.'

'I will call them the footprints of the deceased,' replied Thorndyke imperturbably. 'I took a mould of one of them, and with it, on the same mould, one of my own footprints. Here is the mould, and here is a cast from it.' (He turned and took them from

the triumphant Polton, who had tenderly lifted them out of the trunk in readiness.) 'On looking at the cast, it will be seen that the appearances are not such as would be expected. The deceased was five feet nine inches high, but was very thin and light, weighing only nine stone six pounds, as I ascertained by weighing the body, whereas I am five feet eleven and weigh nearly thirteen stone. But yet the footprint of the deceased is nearly twice as deep as mine—that is to say, the lighter man has sunk into the sand nearly twice as deeply as the heavier man.'

The magistrates were now deeply attentive. They were no longer simply listening to the despised utterances of a mere scientific expert. The cast lay before them with the two footprints side by side; the evidence appealed to their own senses and was proportionately convincing.

'This is very singular,' said the chairman; 'but perhaps you can explain the discrepancy?'

'I think I can,' replied Thorndyke; 'but I should prefer to place all the facts before you first.'

'Undoubtedly that would be better,' the chairman agreed. 'Pray proceed.'

'There was another remarkable peculiarity about these footprints,' Thorndyke continued, 'and that was their distance apart—the length of the stride, in fact. I measured the steps carefully from heel to heel, and found them only nineteen and a half inches. But a man of Hearn's height would have an ordinary stride of about thirty-six inches—more if he was walking fast. Walking with a stride of nineteen and a half inches he would look as if his legs were tied together.

'I next proceeded to the Bay, and took two moulds from the footprints of the man with the nailed shoes, a right and a left. Here is a cast from the mould, and it shows very clearly that the man was walking backwards.'

'How does it show that?' asked the magistrate.

'There are several distinctive points. For instance, the absence of the usual "kick off" at the toe, the slight drag behind the heel, showing the direction in which the foot was lifted, and the undisturbed impression of the sole.'

'You have spoken of moulds and casts. What is the difference between them?'

'A mould is a direct, and therefore reversed, impression. A cast is the impression of a mould, and therefore a facsimile of the object. If I pour liquid plaster on a coin, when it sets I have a mould, a sunk impression, of the coin. If I pour melted wax into the mould I obtain a cast, a facsimile of the coin. A footprint is a mould of the foot. A mould of the footprint is a cast of the foot, and a cast from the mould reproduces the footprint.'

'Thank you,' said the magistrate. 'Then your moulds from these two footprints are really facsimiles of the murderer's shoes, and can be compared with these shoes which have been put in evidence?'

'Yes; and when we compare them they demonstrate a very important fact.'

'What is that?'

'It is that the prisoner's shoes were not the shoes that made those footprints.' A buzz of astonishment ran through the court, but Thorndyke continued stolidly: 'The prisoner's shoes were not in my possession, so I went on to Barker's pond, on

the clay margin of which I had seen footprints actually made by the prisoner. I took moulds of those footprints, and compared them with these from the sand. There are several important differences, which you will see if you compare them. To facilitate the comparison I have made transparent photographs of both sets of moulds to the same scale. Now, if we put the photograph of the mould of the prisoner's right shoe over that of the murderer's right shoe, and hold the two superposed photographs up to the light, we cannot make the two pictures coincide. They are exactly of the same length, but the shoes are of different shape. Moreover, if we put one of the nails in one photograph over the corresponding nail in the other photograph, we cannot make the rest of the nails coincide. But the most conclusive fact of all—from which there is no possible escape—is that the number of nails in the two shoes is not the same. In the sole of the prisoner's right shoe there are forty nails; in that of the murderer there are forty-one. The murderer has one nail too many.'

There was a deathly silence in the court as the magistrates and Mr. Bashfield pored over the moulds and the prisoner's shoes, and examined the photographs against the light. Then the chairman asked: 'Are these all the facts, or have you something more to tell us?' He was evidently anxious to get the key to this riddle.

'There is more evidence, your Worship,' said Anstey. 'The witness examined the body of deceased.' Then, turning to Thorndyke, he asked:

'You were present at the post-mortem examination?'

'I was.'

'Did you form any opinion as to the cause of death?'

'Yes. I came to the conclusion that death was occasioned by an overdose of morphia.'

A universal gasp of amazement greeted this statement. Then the presiding magistrate protested breathlessly:

'But there was a wound, which we have been told was capable of causing instantaneous death. Was that not the case?'

'There was undoubtedly such a wound,' replied Thorndyke. 'But when that wound was inflicted the deceased had already been dead from a quarter to half an hour.'

'This is incredible!' exclaimed the magistrate. 'But, no doubt, you can give us your reasons for this amazing conclusion?'

'My opinion,' said Thorndyke, 'was based on several facts. In the first place, a wound inflicted on a living body gapes rather widely, owing to the retraction of the living skin. The skin of a dead body does not retract, and the wound, consequently, does not gape. This wound gaped very slightly, showing that death was recent, I should say, within half an hour. Then a wound on the living body becomes filled with blood, and blood is shed freely on the clothing. But the wound on the deceased contained only a little blood-clot. There was hardly any blood on the clothing, and I had already noticed that there was none on the sand where the body had lain.'

'And you consider this quite conclusive?' the magistrate asked doubtfully.

'I do,' answered Thorndyke. 'But there was other evidence which was beyond all question. The weapon had partially divided both the aorta and the pulmonary artery—the main arteries of the body. Now, during life, these great vessels are full of blood at a high internal pressure, whereas after death they become almost empty. It follows that, if this wound had been inflicted during life, the cavity in which those vessels lie would have become filled with blood. As a matter of fact, it contained practically no blood, only the merest oozing from some small veins, so that it is certain that the wound was inflicted after death. The presence and nature of the poison I ascertained by analysing certain secretions from the body, and the analysis enabled me to judge that the quantity of the poison was large; but the contents of the stomach were sent to Professor Copland for more exact examination.'

'Is the result of Professor Copland's analysis known?' the magistrate asked Anstey.

'The professor is here, your Worship,' replied Anstey, 'and is prepared to swear to having obtained over one grain of morphia from the contents of the stomach; and as this, which is in itself a poisonous dose, is only the unabsorbed residue of what was actually swallowed, the total quantity taken must have been very large indeed.'

'Thank you,' said the magistrate. 'And now, Dr. Thorndyke, if you have given us all the facts, perhaps you will tell us what conclusions you have drawn from them.'

'The facts which I have stated,' said Thorndyke, 'appear to me to indicate the following sequence of events. The deceased died about midnight on Sep-

tember 27, from the effects of a poisonous dose of morphia, how or by whom administered I offer no opinion. I think that his body was conveyed in a boat to Sundersley Gap. The boat probably contained three men, of whom one remained in charge of it, one walked up the Gap and along the cliff towards St. Bridget's Bay, and the third, having put on the shoes of the deceased, carried the body along the shore to the Bay. This would account for the great depth and short stride of the tracks that have been spoken of as those of the deceased. Having reached the Bay, I believe that this man laid the corpse down on his tracks, and then trampled the sand in the neighbourhood. He next took off deceased's shoes and put them on the corpse; then he put on a pair of boots or shoes which he had been carrying—perhaps hung round his neck—and which had been prepared with nails to imitate Draper's shoes. In these shoes he again trampled over the area near the corpse. Then he walked backwards to the Shepherd's Path, and from it again, still backwards, to the face of the cliff. Here his accomplice had lowered a rope, by which he climbed up to the top. At the top he took off the nailed shoes, and the two men walked back to the Gap, where the man who had carried the rope took his confederate on his back, and carried him down to the boat to avoid leaving the tracks of stockinged feet. The tracks that I saw at the Gap certainly indicated that the man was carrying something very heavy when he returned to the boat.'

'But why should the man have climbed a rope up the cliff when he could have walked up the Shepherd's Path?' the magistrate asked.

'Because,' replied Thorndyke, 'there would then have been a set of tracks leading out of the Bay without a corresponding set leading into it; and this would have instantly suggested to a smart police-officer—such as Sergeant Payne—a landing from a boat.'

'Your explanation is highly ingenious,' said the magistrate, 'and appears to cover all the very remarkable facts. Have you anything more to tell us?'

'No, your Worship,' was the reply, 'excepting' (here he took from Polton the last pair of moulds and passed them up to the magistrate) 'that you will probably find these moulds of importance presently.'

As Thorndyke stepped from the box—for there was no cross-examination—the magistrates scrutinized the moulds with an air of perplexity; but they were too discreet to make any remark.

When the evidence of Professor Copland (which showed that an unquestionably lethal dose of morphia must have been swallowed) had been taken, the clerk called out the—to me—unfamiliar name of Jacob Gummer. Thereupon an enormous pair of brown dreadnought trousers, from the upper end of which a smack-boy's head and shoulders protruded, walked into the witness-box.

Jacob admitted at the outset that he was a smack-master's apprentice, and that he had been 'hired out' by his master to one Mr. Jezzard as deck-hand and cabin-boy of the yacht *Otter*.

'Now, Gummer,' said Anstey, 'do you remember the prisoner coming on board the yacht?'

'Yes. He has been on board twice. The first

time was about a month ago. He went for a sail with us then. The second time was on the night when Mr. Hearn was murdered.'

'Do you remember what sort of boots the prisoner was wearing the first time he came?'

'Yes. They were shoes with a lot of nails in the soles. I remember them because Mr. Jezzard made him take them off and put on a canvas pair.'

'What was done with the nailed shoes?'

'Mr. Jezzard took 'em below to the cabin.'

'And did Mr. Jezzard come up on deck again directly?'

'No. He stayed down in the cabin about ten minutes.'

'Do you remember a parcel being delivered on board from a London boot-maker?'

'Yes. The postman brought it about four or five days after Mr. Draper had been on board. It was labelled "Walker Bros., Boot and Shoe Makers, London." Mr. Jezzard took a pair of shoes from it, for I saw them on the locker in the cabin the same day.'

'Did you ever see him wear them?'

'No. I never see 'em again.'

'Have you ever heard sounds of hammering on the yacht?'

'Yes. The night after the parcel came I was on the quay alongside, and I heard some one a-hammering in the cabin.'

'What did the hammering sound like?'

'It sounded like a cobbler a-hammering in nails.'

'Have you ever seen any boot-nails on the yacht?'

'Yes. When I was a-clearin' up the cabin the

next mornin', I found a hobnail on the floor in a corner by the locker.'

'Were you on board on the night when Mr. Hearn died?'

'Yes. I'd been ashore, but I came aboard about half-past nine.'

'Did you see Mr. Hearn go ashore?'

'I see him leave the yacht. I had turned into my bunk and gone to sleep, when Mr. Jezzard calls down to me: "We're putting Mr. Hearn ashore," says he; "and then," he says, "we're a-going for an hour's fishing. You needn't sit up," he says, and with that he shuts the scuttle. Then I got up and slid back the scuttle and put my head out, and I see Mr. Jezzard and Mr. Leach a-helpin' Mr. Hearn acrost the deck. Mr. Hearn he looked as if he was drunk. They got him into the boat—and a rare job they had—and Mr. Pitford, what was in the boat already, he pushed off. And then I popped my head in again, 'cause I didn't want them to see me.'

'Did they row to the steps?'

'No. I put my head out again when they were gone, and I heard 'em row round the yacht, and then pull out towards the mouth of the harbour. I couldn't see the boat, 'cause it was a very dark night.'

'Very well. Now I am going to ask you about another matter. Do you know any one of the name of Polton?'

'Yes,' replied Gummer, turning a dusky red. 'I've just found out his real name. I thought he was called Simmons.'

'Tell us what you know about him,' said Anstey, with a mischievous smile.

'Well,' said the boy, with a ferocious scowl at the

bland and smiling Polton, 'one day he come down to the yacht when the gentlemen had gone ashore. I believe he'd seen 'em go. And he offers me ten shillin' to let him see all the boots and shoes we'd got on board. I didn't see no harm, so I turns out the whole lot in the cabin for him to look at. While he was lookin' at 'em he asks me to fetch a pair of mine from the fo'c'sle, so I fetches 'em. When I come back he was pitchin' the boots and shoes back into the locker. Then, presently, he nips off, and when he was gone I looked over the shoes, and then I found there was a pair missing. They was an old pair of Mr. Jezzard's, and what made him nick 'em is more than I can understand.'

'Would you know those shoes if you saw them?'

'Yes, I should,' replied the lad.

'Are these the pair?' Anstey handed the boy a pair of dilapidated canvas shoes, which he seized eagerly.

'Yes, these is the ones what he stole!' he exclaimed.

Anstey took them back from the boy's reluctant hands, and passed them up to the magistrate's desk. 'I think,' said he, 'that if your Worship will compare these shoes with the last pair of moulds, you will have no doubt that these are the shoes which made the footprints from the sea to Sundersley Gap and back again.'

The magistrates together compared the shoes and the moulds amidst a breathless silence. At length the chairman laid them down on the desk.

'It is impossible to doubt it,' said he. 'The broken heel and the tear in the rubber sole, with the remains of the chequered pattern, make the identity practically certain.'

As the chairman made this statement I involuntarily glanced round to the place where Jezzard was sitting. But he was not there; neither he, nor Pitford, nor Leach. Taking advantage of the preoccupation of the Court, they had quietly slipped out of the door. But I was not the only person who had noted their absence. The inspector and the sergeant were already in earnest consultation, and a minute later they, too, hurriedly departed.

The proceedings now speedily came to an end. After a brief discussion with his brother-magistrates, the chairman addressed the Court.

'The remarkable and I may say startling evidence, which has been heard in this court to-day, if it has not fixed the guilt of this crime on any individual, has, at any rate, made it clear to our satisfaction that the prisoner is not the guilty person, and he is accordingly discharged. Mr. Draper, I have great pleasure in informing you that you are at liberty to leave the court, and that you do so entirely clear of all suspicion; and I congratulate you very heartily on the skill and ingenuity of your legal advisers, but for which the decision of the Court would, I am afraid, have been very different.'

That evening, lawyers, witnesses, and the jubilant and grateful client gathered round a truly festive board to dine, and fight over again the battle of the day. But we were scarcely half-way through our meal when, to the indignation of the servants, Sergeant Payne burst breathlessly into the room.

'They've gone, sir!' he exclaimed, addressing Thorndyke. 'They've given us the slip for good.'

'Why, how can that be?' asked Thorndyke.

'They're dead, sir! All three of them!'

'Dead!' we all exclaimed.

'Yes. They made a burst for the yacht when they left the court, and they got on board and put out to sea at once, hoping, no doubt, to get clear as the light was just failing. But they were in such a hurry that they did not see a steam trawler that was entering, and was hidden by the pier. Then, just at the entrance, as the yacht was creeping out, the trawler hit her amidships, and fairly cut her in two. The three men were in the water in an instant, and were swept away in the eddy behind the north pier; and before any boat could put out to them they had all gone under. Jezzard's body came up on the beach just as I was coming away.'

We were all silent and a little awed, but if any of us felt regret at the catastrophe, it was at the thought that three such cold-blooded villains should have made so easy an exit; and to one of us, at least, the news came as a blessed relief.

THE LEAK

By Harold Steevens

Patter, patter, patter. September rain drummed everlastingly on the studio skylight panes. *Drip . . . drip . . .* through some crevice scorched in wood or putty by August sun. Between whiles came a flicker of lightning from somewhere in the wide heavens and the slow roll of gathering thunder.

But Jabez Strone worked on without complaint. The gloom of the autumn afternoon consorted with his mood and matched his picture, 'The Night-Raider'—coming very well, promising to be quite a good thing as Strone's things went. And so it might be, because Strone had much knowledge of darkness and hugged the cover of night's mantle, though his raids were for softer plunder than his canvas marauder's and his weapons subtler; sparing life and goods he took, when he could, what was more precious than either. Thus there were greed and lawlessness and unscrupulous flame in the face of his 'Night-Raider', the truest work that Strone had ever done, a reading of himself, in a way a sort of confession, impelled, to be sure, by the conscience of the artist rather than the man.

A spurt of fire in the darkening studio, a shattering detonation. The lifeless trunk of Jabez Strone reeled where it stood, pitched crumpling, and lay still.

Presently the thunder drew off, muttering, and the rain ceased its drumming. In the silence, with

lengthening pauses, *drip . . . drip . . . drip. . . .* Mournful passing bell for Jabez Strone.

When William Billings, janitor of the Marbletree Studios, brought in the tea, he found the corpse of Jabez Strone. Aghast, the janitor ran at once for a constable, who promptly called in the nearest medical man and sent off an urgent message to the police-station. The surgeon's work was done at a glance; a small discoloured circle on the left temple and a ghastly open wound behind the right ear told him all he needed. Then the police Inspector, Ingleby by name, who had arrived in haste with a young plain-clothes officer, set to work with methodical energy, searching the studio within and surveying it without for traces or clues which might throw light on the tradgedy.

He took possession of the revolver which was lying on the damp floor, first chalking the outline on the boards, then lifting it carefully by means of a paint-brush handle hooked into the trigger-guard. From the smoky smell which still clung to the bore, he judged that the weapon had not long been fired, a conclusion which tallied with the surgeon's pronouncement on the body—'within the hour'. There were scratches on the butt which he left for examination later on.

Seeking further, he came upon something still more definite. This was a letter to Strone intimating the writer's intention of calling upon him that same afternoon to demand an explanation of Strone's behaviour towards a lady unnamed. In tone and terms the letter was indubitably hostile; it was dated from a studio in the same courtyard as

Strone's, and it was signed in a bold hand, 'Adam Delabene.' Apparently Strone had torn the letter across and tossed it into the fireplace, where the Inspector found it.

When he had read the letter through, Ingleby went back to the table where the revolver lay on a clean sheet of drawing-paper and, taking out his pocket lens, bent down for a closer look at those scratches on the butt. Under the magnifying glass the initials showed up plainly enough: 'A. D.'

The natural thing, for a working hypothesis, was to couple the pistol with the letter, and the presumption was strengthened by the janitor's reluctant admission that he had heard Strone and Delabene in violent altercation earlier in the afternoon. Accordingly the Inspector, having sent for a warrant and dismissed the plain-clothes man to make certain inquiries in the vicinity, lost no time in stepping across the courtyard to Adam Delabene's studio.

There was no light burning, but the door was wide open, and a drift of fresh tobacco smoke told him that somebody was within.

'Mr. Delabene?'

'Come in. Do you mind switching on the light? It's on the left there. Thanks.'

As the light went up, Delabene, sunk in the springless depths of an aged arm-chair, with his feet propped up on the table among his paints and oils, cast a swift appraising glance at the wet canvas on his easel, then turned his face towards his visitor. At sight of the tall, uniformed figure he sat up sharply. The Inspector took note of a slim, well-built young man in brisk outdoor condition, judging by the tan on his face and the set of his limbs; brown hair

crisped above a smooth, broad forehead and a forceful nose and mouth.

'Good heavens, what a shock you gave me! But please sit down. You'll find that wreck of a Chippendale fairly safe. Inspector, isn't it?'

'Inspector Ingleby.'

'Glad to see you, Mr. Ingleby. What can I do for you?'

'Well, I don't know. I am making some inquiries that concern your neighbour, Mr. Jabez Strone.'

'Not surprised!' rapped Delabene, then hastily corrected himself: 'But I shouldn't have said that. Go on, Inspector.'

'May I smoke?' Ingleby's eyes, discreetly roving round the room as he talked—the artist's nonchalance impressed him not at all—had come to rest on a fine silver cup standing on the mantelpiece. Now, under pretext of lighting his pipe at the stove, he was able to distinguish the words engraved upon it: 'Revolver Championship.' His eyes gleamed.

'By Jove, you have something to be proud of there, Mr. Delabene,' he said genially, turning towards the artist and pointing to the cup with his pipe. 'I've done a bit of it in my time. Wants a good man to bring that off, though—and a good weapon, too.'

'Mine's a beauty—true to a hair. Would you like to see it?' Delabene warmed to a fellow-enthusiast.

'I should, very much.'

Delabene put out his hand to the table drawer and gave it a tug; the drawer ran out so easily that he brought the other hand hastily to it to save it from slipping out altogether.

'Now, where the deuce——?'—leaning forward and peering into the empty space—'I'd have sworn——' He paused with his hands on the drawer. 'Oh, I remember now. I lent it to Strone.'

The Inspector meanwhile, instead of sitting down again, had wandered quietly behind the artist's chair. And now, leaning forward, with a swift smooth movement he thrust out his arms, one on either side of Delabene, and deftly snapped a pair of handcuffs on his wrists, at the same time cautioning him and explaining the charge upon which he had been arrested.

When that astounded young man realized that protest could avail him absolutely nothing, he accepted his position philosophically, only asking permission to write a note before he went.

Moving his manacled hands with difficulty, he got hold of a piece of paper and scrawled:

'Dear Jill,

'Weep not for me. I've been arrested for shooting Jabez Strone. But I *didn't*.

'ADAM.'

The name on the envelope was: 'Miss Gillian Venables, Withwind Banks, Riverslade.'

'You need not seal it,' said the Inspector. 'I shall have to read it, but I'll see that it's posted.'

Health of dawn in her cheeks and the dew on her feet, a sprig of spindle-berries in her hand and a russet beech-leaf caught in the wind-blown tresses of her hair, Gillian Venables came in to breakfast singing and found Adam's note on her plate. First she thought it was a joke, but that would not do, because the writing, though queer, was certainly

Adam's—she could never mistake it—and Adam would not joke like that. So it must be true. Confound that Strone, what a nuisance the man was! Now she was indignant, then scornful; but she was not alarmed, because she believed with the simple faith of youth that the blunder of his arrest must quickly be rectified. His message was a fiery cross, however, and so, changing hastily into town clothes, she made straight for the Marbletree Studios.

There that old soldier Billings, the janitor, plunged *con brio* into a hoarse and harrowing recital of the previous afternoon's events, so far as he knew them. In the midst of a vivid passage relating to the Inspector he broke off abruptly and, diving for the Nottingham lace curtain which graced his parlour window, peeped cautiously into the courtyard.

'Golly!' he whispered excitedly; 'talk o' the devil there 'e is—Ingleby—see 'im? 'E's going up to the studios. Wot's 'e after now?'

Gillian jumped up to look. 'I'll go and speak to him.'

'Better not, miss, much better not. Yer never know what a copper'll screw out of yer. I've 'ad pals in trouble afore.'

'Nonsense, Billings; we have nothing to hide.'

Before the janitor could intensify his protest, Gillian was out of the lodge and walking briskly in pursuit. Ingleby, in the act of unlocking Adam's door, showed no surprise when she announced herself: he had shrewdly foreseen this meeting.

'You got Mr. Delabene's note, then?'

'Why have you arrested him? He didn't shoot Mr. Strone, you must know that—or you are a very poor judge of character. If Mr. Delabene had committed a murder he would have said so.'

'Stupid of me not to see it in that light!' the Inspector retorted ironically. 'But you see, Miss Venables, I have not the privilege of knowing Mr. Delabene so well as you may do.'

'Obviously. I have known him for nearly a year. In fact, I may as well tell you that we are engaged to be married. Is it likely that I should want to marry a liar—or a fool either?'

'Mr. Delabene's no fool, I'll agree with you there.'

'No, but he would have been a fool to murder Mr. Strone when he could punish him quite enough without. Strone wouldn't have stood a chance with Adam.'

'Punish him? Why should he want to do that?' the Inspector asked innocently.

'Didn't Mr. Delabene tell you? Then why didn't you ask him? Oh, I see; he wanted to keep me out of it, bless him. But you had better know.' The man was civil enough, if dense, and Gillian had no fancy for hampering a fellow when he was trying to do his job.

'Won't you sit down, Miss Venables?' She took Adam's arm-chair.

'It was the evening before yesterday, when I was waiting here for Mr. Delabene. Mr. Strone came over to borrow a tube of paint. After chatting a bit he asked me to go over and look at his picture. I had been to his studio before with Mr. Delabene and I didn't want to seem uncivil, so I went. Well, whether he had been drinking or whether he thought I was that sort of girl—though I'll say this in fairness, I don't think he knew we were engaged—but, anyhow, before I had even looked at the picture, he

took hold of me and tried to—oh, to kiss me and—ugh!' Gillian paused for breath.

'Did he, now!'

'I fought like a vixen and soon threw him off—he was in rotten condition—then dived under his arms and sprinted for the door. He stood and laughed; he must have locked it when we came in and taken the key. I was really frightened then. I thought I was trapped, and of course I didn't want to scream if I could help it. Then I remembered the window on the other side of the studio; there was a curtain over it, but I saw it was open from the way the curtain bulged. I flew across. He ran to cut me off, but I grabbed the curtain and flung it over him. Before he could get clear, I had hopped through the window and dropped on to the pavement.'

'And then?'

'Then I ran round to Mr. Delabene's studio; he was back by that time. I was in a pretty state, half torn to pieces, and when I told him what had happened—I had to, of course—he went mad. I tried to stop him, but he told me to stay where I was and rushed away to Strone's studio. Presently he came back; the place was empty and Strone nowhere to be found. I calmed him down as well as I could, and at last made him promise to do nothing at all that night but write a note saying he would call next day. After all,' with a wave of her hand and a meagre smile, 'there wasn't much harm done and I had given him a scratch or two myself.'

'Yes, I see,' said the Inspector, meditatively. 'Thank you for telling me. Um—not exactly a speech for the defence, Miss Venables?'

'Defence? I am not defending him. Mr. Delabene needs no defence.'

The Inspector raised his eyebrows, but did not press the point. Instead, he said casually:

'I am just going over to the other studio. Would you care to come with me?'

Gillian shuddered as she looked into that desolate place of evil memory and swift-following tragedy, but mastered her repulsion and followed the Inspector inside.

'This chalk mark'—Ingleby was speaking in his matter-of-fact professional way—'shows the position of the revolver; I've taken charge of that. But everything else is just as we found it, except, of course—'

'Yes, yes,' said Gillian, in an awed voice; 'but haven't you thought whether he might have——'

'Suicide? Impossible. You see, the left hand was still holding the palette, and if he had fired with his right he could scarcely have put the muzzle to his *left* temple; the course of the bullet proves that. And there was no powder mark on the skin either.'

Gillian nodded.

'But, apart from all that, we should still have to account for the position of the pistol on the floor. Now, the medical evidence is that death was instantaneous; he would drop where he stood, in front of the easel here. But the body, you see, heeled to the right, whereas the pistol was lying away on the left, nearly three yards from the easel. How did it get there? A dead man could not throw it.'

'No,' said Gillian, thoughtfully; she had forgotten her horror in the interest of his argument. 'No—but a living man might. Tell me, was the

window open? I mean, supposing somebody had come in that way.' She was thinking of her own escape.

'Wide open, yes; but nobody came in or went out by it, and nobody was hiding behind the curtain either. I'll tell you why. You remember how the dust was blowing up before the storm broke? Well, there was a clear layer of it on the floor—the curtain swings free, you see—not the vestige of a footmark anywhere near the window.'

'Wait a minute. Why come in at all, then? Why not stand outside? Nobody was about, I should think, in that deluge, and the window is not overlooked. All he had to do was to wait for the lightning, draw aside the curtain, and fire with the thunder from where he stood. Nobody would notice the shot. Then he pitches in the pistol, to make it look like suicide, and off he goes.'

'Miss Venables, you ought to join the force! There's only one snag to that theory, and it is not insurmountable. This wooden fellow here—lay figure they call it, don't they?—stands right in the line of fire. I tested it yesterday. A bungler would have hit it for certain; a crack shot could have fired under the armpit—there's just room. *A crack shot and nobody else.*'

The import of his words burst upon her like a full-face blow, revealing to her in a flash of cruel enlightenment the whole trend of his reasoning. She turned deadly sick, swaying on her feet.

'Sit down for a moment, won't you?'

Gillian groped for the chair he pulled up for her and sank down, dread at her heart.

'What is it?' she gasped.

'The revolver was Mr. Delabene's.'

As her eyes fluttered and her head began to droop, the watchful Inspector sprang for Strone's carafe, dashed water on his handkerchief, and put it to her forehead. In two or three minutes she recovered and presently murmured: 'I'll go now.'

Ingleby held out his hand, a touch of genuine solicitude, almost of remorse, in his voice.

'Forgive me, Miss Venables. You would have to know sooner or later. And don't imagine you have injured him by anything you have said. Just the contrary. You have convinced me there is no collusion between you—I had to make certain of that, you know. It is a point in his favour, I assure you.'

Gillian was too stricken to answer. Before she went Ingleby scribbled his address on a scrap of paper, saying:

'There's my number. Ring me up whenever you like. If I'm not there, my wife will tell you when I am likely to be in. I'll always help you if I possibly can; you may count on that if anything crops up. Perhaps you may find me a better friend than you think.'

Later in the day Adam Delabene was brought before the magistrate and remanded in custody after formal evidence of arrest.

Gillian visited her sweetheart in prison as often as she was allowed, decked always in her gayest colours. Adam called her his day's ration of sunbeams, and from the idiotic banter which rattled up and down that gloomy little tunnel of stone and iron, harsh conduit of lovers' talk, nobody would

have guessed the creeping fear that dogged her day and night.

How, indeed, could Adam prove that he had lent the revolver to Strone for an artist's 'prop'? How could he ever prove that he had left Strone alive, gone straight back to his own studio, and never stirred out till Ingleby took him away? Nobody saw him; nobody could speak for him. Ingleby, piecing things together, had reached the conclusion that Adam, in a blind fury of vengeance for the vile assault upon his lady-love, had shot down the aggressor and hastily queered his tracks with a false trail of circumstance and invented story. Who would dispute so plausible a theory? Who would ever trouble to search for the leaks in it? Yet there must be many with bitter cause for vengeance upon Strone!

Then came the dreadful day when Adam was committed for trial. Monstrous, fantastic travesty! But Adam's lawyer could neither rebut the facts nor shatter the links of pure assumption which joined them into a damning chain.

When it was all over, Gillian hurried from the Court and rang up Ingleby's house. A few hours later, in the early evening, the same kind-spoken woman who had answered her call mothered her into a little back-parlour, christened 'Father's den'.

Ingleby was touched by the change in her looks, used though he was to such things. The roses had wilted in her cheeks, her face looked pinched, and the zestful manner was not the effortless thing of two weeks ago. His sympathy was increased by his respect for her uncalculating truthfulness and his recollection of the pleasure he had found in watch-

ing the detached and logical working of her mind, to say nothing of the help she had given him.

'Mr. Ingleby, you said I might come to you, didn't you? I want you to lend me Mr. Delabene's revolver.'

The Inspector raised his eyebrows and smiled. 'I'm afraid I can't do that, Miss Venables. May I ask what you want it for?'

'I want to reconstruct the crime,' said Gillian, with the shadow of a smile on her drawn face.

Ingleby stared at her in amazement, then gave way to a long chuckle. 'You do, do you?' he cried at last (he owed her something for that purgatory in the studio). 'And so you shall, my dear young lady, if you want to—but not with that revolver.'

'Oh, I forgot! The finger-prints—how silly of me!'

'No, no—wash out! But the pistol is an 'exhibit', you see; I shall have to produce it, and I daren't let it out of my hands for a minute. But look, here's an old one of mine—same pattern or near enough. If I lend it to you, you must promise to be careful and not hurt yourself—or anybody else—and bring it back to me as soon as you have done with it.'

'It isn't the first time I've handled these things.'

'Whatever you say I believe, Miss Venables; you know that, don't you? Now you'll want the key of the studio. But listen; nobody else must have it and nobody must go inside but you. No reporters—not at any price; they've been hanging round there like bees about a honey-pot.'

'I promise, and thank you very much.'

'A bit of true blue, that girl!' mused the Inspector, when she had gone. 'Oh, Lord, what a pity!

But you never know; she might find something I've missed. Good luck to her, anyhow. "Reconstruct the crime!" Oh, that's rich. I'll tell the Chief that!'

Gillian was desperate. Cold reason told her that her chance of tracing a criminal whose very existence the police refused to credit was small indeed. Yet she could not sit still while the waters of doom closed surely over Adam's head. The phrase which had amused Ingleby so much meant little more than words to her; nevertheless, the idea had come to her in the extremity of her distress and she dared not reject it.

Gillian unlocked Strone's studio, stepped in quickly and turned the key behind her, then leaned her back against the door while she recovered from the spasm of loathing and fear with which the place affected her. Presently her courage came sweeping back, and with it a surprising sense of power. Shut off alike from aid or interference, she was mistress here, for this one hour—she felt it, believed it—mistress of her destiny. Urging, supporting, infusing her like a refreshing essence, was her love for Adam—nay, was Adam's self so dear, in fancy drawn hither by the power of her love.

Without shirking her eyes travelled over the barnlike studio, searching first the dark corners and the eerie spaces of the roof, then coming to rest on the open area under the skylight, where the artist worked and where he died. There was his unfinished picture still on the easel; his table, littered with colours, brushes, knives—all the paraphernalia of the craft; his luxurious sofa. Grimmer than all, the lay figure, with its horrible suggestion of a

naked corpse come back to life without a soul—a slave for good or evil. Vigorous in pose, lean of body and limb, the thing looked so ghastly human that she would gladly have turned and fled. The friendly sun seemed far away; rain spattered on the glass; the place was like a sepulchre.

'I'll have the jimjams in a minute!' she said aloud, and with firm lips and a toss of her hazel curls, as though to fling off her horrors, she marched up to the easel.

Although the picture was unfinished, the central figure was well painted in: a loose, unbridled face, aflame with greed and violence, the human beast incarnate. Gillian shuddered and turned away, but quickly looked back again; her eye had caught the outline of a tiny circle chalked in but not yet painted. Examining it more closely, she made out that the man was holding a pistol and aiming it so truly that the muzzle pointed straight to the observer's eye.

But it was not the craftsmanship that set her brain tingling—Gillian was no artist—it was *the pistol*! Exactly! Then this would be the very picture for which Strone had borrowed Adam's revolver! Fancy Ingleby missing that! So far good; a splendid beginning. Now, what followed next?

Thinking feverishly, intent to unmask the clue—if clue it was—before it slipped her, she stared out into the studio with unseeing eyes. But, think as she would, no light came, and presently the tension of her brain relaxed; her eyes awoke again. And then, what—what was that before her? Her body stiffened, her head craned forward, with parted lips and eyes vividly alert. She was staring at

the lay figure—no thought of horror now—staring at the long, lean arm and hand stretched out and pointing straight at her. Below, on the floor near by, was marked in strong white outline the rough shape of a pistol.

'Oh, Jill, you fool!' she cried with a gleeful laugh. 'You utter little fool!' and, pouncing on her hand-case, she pulled out the detective's revolver and skipped up to the lay figure.

'Take hold of this, old man'—nestling it in his palm—'I think we are going to be friends after all.'

She threaded the jointed forefinger through the trigger-guard, bent three fingers round the butt, and the thumb over the top. It was an awkward handful, but she managed it.

'Feeling rather wooden to-day, aren't you? Now hold steady while I cock the trigger; that's how you had it—look at the picture, man!' As the hammer clicked back into position the trigger went forward and rested firmly against the forefinger.

'Oh!'—a drop of water from the leaky skylight plopped on her hand, for the rain had come on in good earnest and was pattering busily on the glass.

Shaking it off impatiently, she went back to the easel and, taking a brush from the table, stood up to the canvas as though she were painting. Then, glancing sideways at the figure, she saw that the revolver was in line with her head.

'There! What did I say?' Sense or nonsense, the sound of her own voice steadied her wonderfully. 'Now, what's the next thing? Ingleby's an ass; Adam said so, so it must be true—quite a nice ass, though. Well, who fired the pistol, and how?

That's the point. Why don't you answer, wooden-head?'

She knitted her brows, eyes fixed on the pistol. But now she was at a dead-end again—and time was slipping by.

'Brains, Jill, brains! Buck up, old fellow, and give me a lead. What about a string tied to the trigger and pulled by somebody at the window? Oh, confound you, rain! How can I think in such a row?'

Snap!

'Ah!' Gillian shrieked and sprang backwards. The metallic clash of the trigger in the lonely studio was as startling as a cannon-shot. Rooted and pale, she stared at the wooden hand, her eyes wide with alarm. That lifeless hand had fired at her—and the muzzle was sagging from the shock!

'Suffering snakes!' muttered Gillian, pulling fiercely at her nerve. Then, defiantly: 'You're not going to frighten me, you wooden old devil! How did you do that?' She walked up to the figure. 'No more tricks, corpse-face! Lucky for you it wasn't loaded; Adam would have torn you limb from limb. We'll get to the bottom of this.'

First she inspected the wooden hand from every angle.

'That trigger wanted some pulling. Oh, blow!' Another raindrop splashed on the crown of her head as she bent over the pistol. 'Somebody thinks your hands want washing, and I'm not surprised, you black-hearted old scoundrel!'

Observing nothing by which she could account for the mystery, she took away the revolver and wiped it on a paint-rag—Ingleby would never for-

give her if she let his weapon rust. Then, taking thumb and fingers one by one, she examined each in turn. There was nothing extraordinary about them that she could see: just plain, straightforward cedar-wood, beautifully smoothed and jointed—not a hidden gadget anywhere.

Plop!—on the nape of her neck this time. She looked up wrathfully at the skylight. But the word that jumped to her lips as the chilly raindrop trickled down her spine was instantly forgotten.

That deluge streaming over the panes—why, yes, of course! It was on just such a pouring day as this that the murder—but *was* it a murder? Could the very same thing that happened just now have happened then—because of the rain dripping on pistol and hand? For some cause that she could not fathom? Was it possible? *Could* it be?

Then in a twinkling Gillian flung reason to the winds, surrendering herself consciously, joyously, to something within her which was more than reason, or less—she cared not which—an intuitive light which leapt over reason's paltry barriers and sped her to her goal in a bound. *She was right!* She did not know how or why—did not want to, so long as she *was*.

Her brain was racing now, free as the air. She was wasting her time there. She must have help, expert help. Nobody would believe her unsupported word, certainly not the police. But with the experts on her side—— She flew to gather up her things, murmuring, 'Bless you, rain! bless you, bless you! Forget all the nasty things I said. Bless you for ever and ever!' Then she ran to the door, where the faithful janitor kept watch.

'Billings, I believe I'm on the track—I must be!'

'Who did it, miss?'

'Nobody! That is to say—walk with me while I tell you. I've got to hurry frightfully. Yes, please—taxi, as quick as ever you can.'

Gillian had thought of her old physics Professor, not without a twinge of remorse for her shameful neglect of him and his science since her college days came to an end a year or so ago. But that was before she knew Adam, and 'Ditty' would forgive her. He would help her, too, if any one could, and that was the only thing that mattered just now.

She drove up to the gloomy old pile just as the students were scuttling off home and ran her man to earth in his private 'lab.'. Professor Dittany welcomed her with open arms—she had been rather a favourite of his. When he found that she had come to him for help in serious need, the day's weariness slipped from his face, the glint of scientific battle shone in his eyes; he became once more the strong tower of brain and rigid truth that she remembered so well.

Settling her in his own comfortable chair, the Professor perched himself on a bench-stool and told her to fire away.

'Well done, Gillian,' he said quietly when she had finished. 'You were always a good observer.'

Reaching out from where he sat, he turned on the tap of the sink, then pulled open a drawer and took out a small sliding gauge. From his pocket he produced the stump of a stout unpolished cedar-wood pencil, inserted it in the gauge, and pushed the slide up to it. When the gauge held the pencil

exactly, without either play or pressure, he fixed the slide. Then, taking out the pencil, he tossed it into the sink—and began chatting about old times.

Gillian, in her fever of excitement, could hardly bear to listen to him, but the Professor talked steadily on, and presently he hit upon a forgotten laboratory tale that made her laugh.

'That's better!' he said, demurely. 'Now let us see what has happened.'

Slipping off his stool, he rescued the pencil stump from the water, wiped off the surface moisture, and placed it on the gauge. It did not fit—would not go in at all, without forcing.

'It isn't much,' said Professor Dittany, dropping naturally into his class-room manner, 'the fraction of a millimetre, but that is enough for the purpose of our experiment. We are illustrating a complicated and little understood phenomenon in which imbibition, induced by osmotic pressure, possibly plays an important part. Whatever the explanation, a certain quantity of water was, in fact, compelled to enter the minute interstices of the wood, and the force of its entry was such that the wood was obliged to make room for it.'

'You mean—the pencil swelled?'

'"The same idea in vulgar phrase,"' quoted Dittany, with a smile. 'You have heard of the old trick of splitting stone by driving a wooden wedge into a fissure and soaking it with water. Very well, then; that gives you an idea of the enormous force which swelling wood exerts. When the wood happens to be jammed in between an immovable trigger-guard and a lightly cocked trigger——'

Gillian jumped up from her chair and put her

hands on his shoulders. There were tears in her eyes, though her lips were smiling and her face was flushed with delight.

'Will Ingleby believe it?'

'He's got to,' declared Professor Dittany, with cheery confidence. 'We'll make him. Get him along to the studio and tell him I'll be there too, if I may. They know me pretty well at Scotland Yard. We'll have a demonstration: Professor Gillian Venables, assisted by——'

'A perfect darling! I could hug you, Professor!'

'The frigid detachment of the professional scientist, Gillian——'

'Pouf!' she said, and, throwing her arms round his neck, she planted an uncompromising kiss on his ascetic cheek.

Inspector Ingleby raised his eyebrows higher than ever when Gillian burst into 'Father's den' that night with the announcement that she had solved the mystery—which to him was no mystery. But Professor Dittany on the warpath was a man to take on one's side, as Ingleby well knew, and he readily promised to attend the demonstration.

Gillian left nothing to chance. By the Professor's shrewd advice she got the janitor to light the stove and thoroughly dry the wooden hand. She also brought her wickerwork dress-stand to the studio and fitted it up with an old jacket she found there—the 'Night Raider's,' as it happened—and a roughly painted head of rags. This she placed before the easel, as an artist might stand. Billings cleaned up Ingleby's revolver for her, and she fixed it in the hand with anxious care exactly as she had done

before, or so she prayed. Then, as the day was fine, she sent Billings up to the roof with water buckets and a syringe, to represent the absent rain.

'Better all stand away by the door, miss,' the old soldier impressed upon her as he went off cheerfully to his job. 'Never get in front of the muzzle, as we say in the Army. Besides, 'e might think we're pullin' the strings—see, miss?' He lowered a shrewd eyelid.

'Good idea, Billings. Make it so, as we say in the Navy. I'll be careful.'

Patter, patter came the drops on the leaky skylight panes. And presently, *drip . . . drip*. Gillian, in an agony of suspense, glued her eyes on the wooden hand, counting each tiny splash. The Professor watched too, tensely absorbed. Ingleby alone, knowing nothing of what was coming (if come it should), surveyed the little tableau with professional impassivity—the gaunt wooden man with menacing arm outstretched, the grotesque dummy planted in front of the easel, and behind it that terrible face of greed and flame staring out of the dead artist's canvas.

Patter, patter . . . drip . . . drip . . . drip.

Gillian could hardly contain herself. Would it never happen? And if not—'Adam! Oh my Adam!' wailed her heart.

Crash!

Over went the wicker dummy, sprawling on the floor. Down dropped the revolver with a thump and a rattle on the boards.

The dumbfounded police Inspector started forward, a flush on his determined face, his grizzled head thrust out, one solid arm flung back instinc-

tively to hold the other two from danger. Then, striding up to look, he found the muzzle of the pistol lying crosswise over the old chalk outline and a bullet hole through the ridiculous rag doll's ear.

'You desperate young devil!' he cried, half way between anger and admiration. 'You've saved your man, by crimbo, but you might have sent us all to kingdom come! Why didn't you say it was loaded?'

'I never knew it was!' Gillian, startled as much as anybody, was trembling on the Professor's arm.

'That's right!' A husky voice from above their heads made them all jump again. Looking up, they saw the wet and grimy countenance of Billings peering through the trap of the skylight. 'Quite right, guv'nor. I shoved in a round myself, just to make sure. You '*ad* to believe it — matter o' life and death, see? So we wasn't taking no risks.'

'No risks! Oh Lord!' growled the Inspector. 'Come down out of that before you tell any more lies! Now, Professor, perhaps you'll be good enough to unfold the mystery. And then I'll get away, before anything else goes off. Too many tricks and traps about this place for me.'

'It's really quite simple,' said the Professor.

'Glad to hear it! Simple or not, I'd never have believed it if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes — not in a thousand years. Nor will the Chief either, I can tell you that, unless you can explain it to him by the book.'

'He shall have my report to-night,' promised Professor Dittany.

'So much the better. We don't want to keep that young man longer than we can help — do we, Miss Venables?'

'You ought never to have kept him at all!' snapped Gillian. 'I told you that weeks ago.'

'The lady's right,' grinned Ingleby. 'She always is!'

'I've puzzled a lot over that,' said Adam. His arms enveloped her and should never unfold! Her cheek was against his and should stay there for ever!

'Yes, how was it, I wonder?' Was ever such a paradise in the compass of a sagging old arm-chair?

'Do you remember that day when I was showing you how to load a round quickly? Then we started talking about something else—ourselves, was it?—something important, anyhow. I must have forgotten to eject—I can't remember doing it—and put the thing away with the cartridge still in it. Shocking thing to do! Then I let him take it just as it was. So I suppose I'm really a sort of murderer after all.'

Gillian put her hand over his mouth.

'What's the child babbling? Ducky boy, you know you're not! There was no murder in your heart.'

'There was, though, till you charmed it away, you adorable beguiler!'

Gillian's arm tightened round his neck.

'Mercy on his soul, old boy! Now let's forget about it.'

'Amen to that, Jill.'

THE HIDDEN WITNESS

By 'Sapper' (H. C. McNeile)

I don't know exactly when it was that I first realized that Miles Blandish was in love with Mary Somerville. As a general rule men are very unobservant on such matters, and I suppose I was no exception. All I know is that when I mentioned the matter guardedly to Phyllis Dankerton she observed, brightly, that the next great discovery I should make was that the earth was round. So I suppose it must have been fairly obvious.

Anyway, it doesn't much matter, except that I'd like to get it accurate. The house party was all there when I arrived. To take them in order there were, first of all, our host and hostess—John Somerville and his wife. He was a wealthy man—something in cotton—who had reached such a position of affluence at a comparatively early age that he could, had he wanted to, have given up business altogether. But he preferred to have something to do, and now, at the age of forty-five, he still went up to London five days a week. A smallish man, thin and spare, with shrewd, thoughtful eyes that missed very little that went on around him.

It was through Mary, his wife, that I had got to know him. She was fifteen years his junior, and if ever there was a case of wondering why two people had got married, this was it. She was one of the most lovely creatures I have ever seen—the sort of girl who could have married literally any one she chose. And then quite suddenly five years ago she married John.

Personally, I have always thought that money had a good deal to do with it. Not that John wasn't quite a decent fellow, but having said that you'd said all. By no possible stretch of imagination could he be regarded as the sort of man to inspire romance in a girl's heart. He was far too self-centred, far too much the business man to the exclusion of everything else. And yet Mary, with numerous men at her feet, had selected him.

My own impression was that she had begun to regret it. They got on very well together, but it was a very restrained relationship. She liked him, and he was inordinately proud of her—and that was the end of it. So much for our host and hostess.

There was a married couple—Peter Dankerton and his wife. She was a bridge fiend, with the tongue of an adder, but distinctly good-looking and very amusing company.

The younger element consisted of Tony Merrick, a subaltern in the Gunners, and a jolly little kid called Marjorie Stanway, who spent most of their time practising new steps in the hall to a gramophone.

And finally, there was a man called Miles Blandish, who was the only one I had never met before. He was a planter of sorts out in the F.M.S. About thirty years old, he seemed to have been everywhere and done everything. He had rather a lazy, pleasant voice, and a trick of raising his eyebrows when he spoke that made the most ordinary remark seem amusing; and little Marjorie, to the fury of young Merrick, adored him openly. In fact, he was the outstanding personality of the party, Mary always excepted.

She introduced me to him as soon as I arrived.

'The only one you don't know, Bill,' she said. 'Miles—this is Bill Canford, who is almost a fixture about the house.'

'A very pleasant occupation,' he remarked, lightly, and I got the impression that his eyes were very observant. 'If I could afford to become a fixture, I should choose an English country house to do it in.'

We talked on casually for a while, and he was certainly a most interesting man. And an efficient one. His knowledge, obviously acquired on the spot, of rubber and its future showed him as a man who could observe and think for himself.

'And where,' I said, after a while, 'is our worthy host?'

'My dear Bill,' laughed Mary, looking up from the tea table, 'John has got a new toy. His present secretary's face is so frightful that he can't bear her in the same room with him. So he has got a sort of phonograph machine—a super-dictaphone, I think he calls it—and he dictates his letters into it. You don't have to talk into a trumpet like you do with most of them. It stands in a corner, and looks just like an ordinary box. Then she comes and takes off the records and writes down what he has said.'

'It might almost have been worth while to change his secretary,' said Blandish, lazily. 'Still, he is doubtless very happy.'

He leant over to light her cigarette, and I was struck by the atmosphere of physical fitness that seemed to radiate from the man: hard as nails; without an ounce of superfluous flesh on him. In fact, a pretty tough customer in a rough house.

I suppose a woman would have spotted the lie of the land that night after dinner. In the light of subsequent events I now realize that the tension was already there, though I didn't get it personally. It was just a little thing—a casual scrap of conversation between two rubbers. Blandish was shuffling the cards, and Phyllis Dankerton, who had been his partner, made some remark about the excellence of his bridge not having been impaired by his living in the back of beyond.

He grinned and said: 'We're not all savages, Mrs. Dankerton. Even though there aren't any Ten Commandments, and a man can raise a thirst.'

'At the moment,' remarked John Somerville, quietly, 'we don't happen to be East of Suez.'

The faintest of smiles flickered for an instant round Phyllis Dankerton's lips. Then——

'How marvellously Kipling gets human nature, doesn't he?' she murmured. 'You and I, Bill—and an original no-trumper of mine is open to the gravest suspicion.'

Yes, the tension had begun. To what extent it had grown I don't know: but it was there. As I say, I realized that afterwards. John Somerville suspected his wife and Blandish. Not that he said anything, or even hinted at anything that night, with the exception of that one remark. As always, he was the courteous, perfect host—at least, so it seemed to me. Though when, a couple of days later, I was discussing things with Phyllis Dankerton, she regarded me pityingly when I said so.

'My dear man,' she said, 'you must be partially wanting. There is an atmosphere in this house you could cut with a knife. Our worthy John is watch-

ing those two as a cat watches a mouse. It's all excessively amusing.'

'Do you think Mary is in love with Blandish?' I said.

'Wasn't it Maugham who said in one of his plays that a lot of unnecessary fuss is made about the word 'love'? Quite obviously she is immensely attracted by him—who wouldn't be? I'm crazy about him myself. And my dear Bill, I might be eighty-one with false teeth, for all the notice he takes of me. It's cruel hard on a deserving girl. There's poor old Peter, who wouldn't notice the Alps unless they were covered with Stock Exchange quotations, and yet I throw myself at that brute's head in vain.'

'I wonder how Mary met him,' I said.

'Really, Bill,' she cried, impatiently, 'you're intolerably dull to-day. She met him in the same way that everybody does meet people, presumably. Anyway, what does it matter? The beginning has nothing to do with it. It's the end that interests me.'

'You really think that it's serious?' I said.

She shrugged her shoulders.

'With a woman like Mary, you never know. I don't believe she would ever have a real affair with a man if she was still living in her husband's house. But she's quite capable of bolting for good and all if she loved the man sufficiently. Cheer up, Bill'—she laughed—'it's not your palaver. By the look on your face Mary might be *your* wife.'

'I'm very fond of Mary,' I said, stiffly. 'We've known one another since we were kids.'

And at that moment young Merrick came in and

the conversation dropped. But I couldn't get it out of my mind. That there should be even the bare possibility of Mary running away with another man seemed to knock the bottom out of my universe. And soon I found myself watching them, too, and trying to gauge the state of the affair. Was Mary in love with him? That was the question I asked myself a dozen times a day. That he should be in love with her was only natural. But was the converse true? I studied her expression when she didn't know I was looking at her, and I had to admit that there was a change. For a few moments, perhaps, she would sit sunk in her thoughts, and then she would make an effort to pull herself together and be laughing and bright as she always used to be. But it was forced, and I knew it: she couldn't deceive me. And sometimes when she came out of her reverie, if Blandish was in the room, her eyes would rest on him for a second, as if she was trying to find the answer to some unspoken question.

Then I started to watch him. But there wasn't much to be got from Miles Blandish's face. Years of poker playing had turned it into an expressionless mask when he wished to make it so. But I managed to catch him unawares once or twice. After lunch one day, for instance. He was holding a match for her cigarette, and over the flame their eyes had met. And in his was a look of such concentrated love and passion as I have never seen before. Then, in an instant it was gone, and he made some commonplace remark. But to me it seemed as if the truth had been proclaimed through a megaphone.

And another time it was even more obvious.

Without thinking I went into the billiard-room, and they were alone there. They were standing very close together by the fireplace talking earnestly, and as I opened the door they moved apart quickly. In fact, it was so obvious that I almost committed the appalling solecism of apologizing for intruding. Blandish picked up a paper; Mary smiled and said, 'Why don't you two men have a game?' But once again the truth had been shouted to high Heaven: these two were in love with one another. What was going to be the end of it? Was Mary going to bolt with him, or would the whole thing die a natural death when he went out East again?

I believe it might have been the latter, had John Somerville not brought matters to a head. It was after dinner, on the same day that I had surprised them in the billiard-room.

'By the way, Blandish,' he said, as we were beginning to form up for bridge, 'when are you going back again?'

'I haven't quite decided yet,' said Blandish, lighting a cigarette. 'Not for some little while, I think.'

'Want to pay a round of visits, I suppose, and see all your friends. I've just remembered, my dear'—he turned to his wife—'Henry Longstaffe is very anxious to come for a few days, as soon as we can put him up. He and I have a rather considerable business deal to discuss.'

I glanced at Phyllis Dankerton: a smile was hovering on her lips; I glanced at Miles Blandish: his face was expressionless; I glanced at Mary: she was staring at her husband. All three of them knew, as I knew, that there was no spare room in the

house. If Henry Longstaffe came to stay, somebody had to go.

'I'm afraid I shall have to fold up my tent and fade away very soon,' said Blandish, easily. 'Would the day after to-morrow do for Mr. Longstaffe, or would you sooner he came to-morrow?'

'The day after to-morrow will do perfectly,' said Somerville. 'Sorry you can't stay longer.'

And then we sat down to bridge in an atmosphere, as Phyllis Dankerton afterwards described it, which would have frozen a furnace. Nothing more, of course, was said—but words were unnecessary. The gloves were off, and every one knew it. Miles Blandish had been kicked out of the house as blatantly as if he had been shown the door. Moreover, it had been done in the presence of all of us, which made the matter worse.

'I think John is a fool,' said Phyllis Dankerton to me, just before we went to bed. 'And a vulgar fool at that. One doesn't do that sort of thing in front of other people. If I were Mary I'd give him such a telling off as he would never forget.'

'He's an extremely angry man,' I remarked, 'and that accounts for it.'

'Then it oughtn't to,' she retorted. 'It simply isn't done. To have said it to him privately would have been a very different matter. And you mark my words, Bill, unless I'm much mistaken, friend John will have achieved the exact opposite to what he intended. He has simply forced their hands.'

'You think she'll run away with him?' I said.

'I think she is far more likely to now than she was before. And if she does John will be very largely to blame. To-morrow is going to be the crucial day,

while he is in London. The great decision will be made then.'

She gave a little bitter laugh and her eyes were very sad.

'God! what fools women are,' she said, under her breath. 'What damned fools!'

Then she went to bed, leaving me to a final night-cap. And when I had followed her example, and lay tossing and turning, unable to sleep, there was one picture I couldn't get out of my mind. It was the picture of Mary and Miles Blandish together, leaning over the stern of an East-bound liner. And at last they turned and looked at one another, as man and woman look at one another when they love. Then they went below.

I must get the events of the next day straight in my mind. Phyllis Dankerton was right: it was the crucial day. But somehow or other things seem a little blurred in my head. I'm not quite certain of the order in which they happened.

First of all there came the interview between Mary and Miles Blandish. I overheard part of it—deliberately. They were in the billiard-room once more, and I happened to stroll past the little window at one end of the room, which is high up in the wall. It was open, and I could hear what they said distinctly, though they couldn't see me.

'My dear,' Blandish was saying, 'it 's a big decision that will alter your life completely and irrevocably. It 's a decision that cannot be come to lightly. Divorce and that sort of thing seem a comparatively small matter when applied to other people. But when it 's applied to oneself it doesn't seem quite so small. Wait, my darling, wait. Let me have my

say first. You are going to be the one who has to make the big sacrifice. It's not going to affect me; it never does affect the man. And in my case even less so than usual. My home is out East. It doesn't matter the snap of a finger what I do. But with you it's different. You're giving up all this; you're running away with a man who is considerably poorer than your husband. You are coming to a strange life, amid strange surroundings—a life you may not like. But a life which, if you do leave your husband, you will have to stick to.'

Yes; he put it very fairly, did Miles Blandish. There was no trace of pleading or emotion in his voice; he seemed to be at pains to keep everything matter-of-fact. And because of that the force of the appeal was doubled.

'We are neither of us children, Mary.' The quiet, measured words went on. 'We know enough to disregard catch phrases like the world being well lost for love. It isn't, and nobody but a fool would think it was. And if you come with me it won't be —it will be changed, that's all. But it's going to be a big change: that's what I want you to get into your head.'

And then, at last, Mary spoke.

'I realize that it's going to be a big change, Miles. Do you really think that matters? I realize that life out there will be different from this. Do you really think I care? My dear, it's not any material alteration in surroundings that has made me hesitate —it's been something far more important and fundamental. I'm not going to mince words; you attracted me from the first time we met. But my great problem was—was it only attraction? If so,

I'd have been a fool to go. It is a big decision, as you say—an irrevocable one, and to take it because of a passing whim would be folly. Last night—when John said what he did to you—I knew with absolute certainty. Every single instinct and thought of mine ranged themselves on your side. I've never loved John; now I positively dislike him.'

'That 's not quite enough, Mary,' said Blandish, gravely. 'I don't want you to come with me because you dislike John. I want you to come with me because you love me.'

'Miles—my darling.'

I scarcely heard the words, so softly were they spoken. And then came silence. In my mind I could see them there staring into one another's eyes, staring down the unknown path that they were to take together. A little blindly I turned and walked away. The matter was decided, the choice had been made. For good or ill, Mary was going with Miles Blandish.

'Bill, what is the matter with you? Are you ill?'

With an effort I pulled myself together; Phyllis Dankerton was looking at me with amazement on her face.

'Not a bit,' I answered. 'Why should I be?'

'My dear man,' she said, brightly, 'I am partially responsible for Peter's tummy, but I hold no brief for yours. I don't know why you should be ill, but you certainly look it. By the way, I saw our two turtle-doves making tracks for the billiard-room. I wonder if the momentous decision has yet been reached.'

I said nothing. I felt I couldn't stand the worry any more. Phyllis Dankerton is all right in small

doses, but there are times when she drives one positively insane. So I made some fatuous remark and left her, vaguely conscious that the surprised look had returned to her face. What the devil did it matter? What did anything matter except that Mary was going with Miles Blandish?

Nothing could alter that fact now; they were neither of them the type of people who change their mind once it is made up. And at dinner that night I found myself watching them curiously. They were both more silent than usual, which was hardly to be wondered at. And John Somerville, who obviously had not yet been told, kept glancing from one to the other.

That he would be told, I felt sure. The idea of bolting on the sly would not appeal to either Mary or Blandish: they weren't that sort. But would it be done after dinner, or postponed to the following day? Or would Blandish go in the ordinary course of events, leaving Mary to break the news to John?

The point was settled after dinner. John Somerville had gone to his room to write some letters, and suddenly I saw Blandish glance at Mary significantly. Then, with a quick little nod, he left the room.

'What about a stroll, Canford?' said young Merrick, and automatically I got up. Why not?

'It strikes me,' he remarked, confidentially, when we were out of earshot, 'that there's a bit of an air of gloom and despondency brooding over the old ancestral hall. Somerville's face at dinner was enough to turn the butter rancid. And Blandish seems quite different these last few days.'

'When a man,' I remarked, 'is in love with

another man's wife and the other man finds it out, it doesn't make for conviviality in the house.'

He stopped dead and stared at me.

'Good Lord!' he muttered, 'that 's the worry, is it? Well, I'm damned. I never spotted it. But I jolly well know which of the two I'd choose. Mine host, even though I'm eating his salt, is not much to my liking.'

'Perhaps not,' I said, curtly. 'But he happens to be your hostess's husband.'

'You mean to say,' he began, and then suddenly he gripped my arm. 'My God! Canford—look there.'

We were about a hundred yards from the house. From one of the downstair rooms the light was streaming out through the open French windows. And the room was John Somerville's study. He was standing up with his back to the desk, facing Miles Blandish, and it was evident that a bitter quarrel was in progress. We could hear no actual words, but the attitude of the two men told its own tale.

'Damn it—let's clear out,' muttered Merrick. 'Rather rotten, don't you think? Seems like spying on them. I'm going back to the house, anyway.'

He strolled off, and then once again I riveted my eyes on the study window, on that grim, fierce, age-old struggle of two males for a female, the struggle that brings murder into the air.

And when ten minutes later I went into the drawing-room the atmosphere was not much better. Mary glanced up quickly as I came through the window, and her face fell when she saw who it was. Merrick made a grimace at me, and Phyllis Danker-

ton went on playing patience religiously. Even little Marjorie Stanway seemed to feel there was something the matter, and was fidgeting about the room.

Then, suddenly, it happened. The door was flung open and Somerville's secretary dashed into the room. Her face was ashen white, and she was gasping for breath.

'Mrs. Somerville,' she almost screamed, 'he's dead. There's a knife in his back. He's been stabbed.'

For a moment no one spoke. Then Dankerton said a little dazedly, 'Who is dead?'

'Mr. Somerville,' sobbed the woman. 'At his desk.'

And again, for what seemed an eternity there was silence. Mary, her face as white as a sheet, was staring at the secretary, as if she couldn't grasp what had happened. Young Merrick was saying 'Good God!' under his breath over and over again and watching me. And at last I heard a voice say, 'We must get the police.' It was my own.

'Don't you think that we ought to go and make certain?' muttered Dankerton. 'He may not be dead. Not the women, of course.'

And then, at last, Mary spoke.

'Where is Miles?'

It was hardly more than a whisper, but it sounded as if it had been shouted through a megaphone in the deathly silence. And at that moment he appeared in the window. For a second or two he stood there looking from one to the other of us: then he spoke.

'What on earth is the matter?'

It was Dankerton who answered him.

'Somerville has been stabbed in the back,' he said, gravely. 'His secretary says he is dead. We were just going along to see.'

'Stabbed in the back!' cried Blandish, in amazement. 'But whom by?'

'We don't know,' I said, and once again Merrick's eye met mine. 'Let's go and see if there is anything to be done.'

But there wasn't: that was obvious at the first glance. He lay there, huddled over his desk, his eyes glazed and staring. And thrust into his back up to the hilt was a knife I had often seen lying on the mantelpiece. For a long while no one spoke. Then Dankerton pulled himself together.

'Look here, you fellows, this is a pretty ghastly business. We must get the police at once. I'll tell the butler to ring up.'

'Yes,' agreed Blandish, quietly. 'We must get the police.'

His eyes were riveted on the knife. Then, with an effort, he turned and looked at us each in turn.

'He and I had a frightful row to-night.' He spoke with intense deliberation, and once again Merrick looked at me. 'A frightful row.'

'My dear fellow,' muttered Dankerton, awkwardly. 'Look here, I'll see about the police.'

He bustled out of the room, and suddenly Merrick took the bull by the horns.

'This is a pretty grim affair, Blandish. You see, Canford and I were outside there, and we saw you having words with — with him.'

'Then you must have seen who did this,' said Blandish, eagerly.

'Unfortunately, I didn't,' said Merrick. 'It

seemed to me to be a private affair, and I went back to the drawing-room.'

'And I followed shortly after,' I remarked.

Once more silence fell, while Blandish stared at the dead man.

'I had a frightful row,' he repeated, mechanically, 'and then I went out into the garden through the window. Damn it,' he exploded, suddenly, 'you don't think I did it, do you?'

'Of course not, my dear chap,' I cried. 'Of course not.'

He walked a little stiffly out of the room, and I turned to Merrick.

'What 's your opinion?' I said, at length.

'What 's yours?' he answered. 'Damn it, Canford—if he didn't do it, somebody else did. And if it was anybody in the garden we'd have seen him.'

'We might not,' I said. 'If he was hiding.'

'In the back, too,' he muttered. 'A dirty business. God! I wish the police would come.'

And in about half an hour they did. An inspector and a sergeant arrived, and with them the doctor. The cause of death was clear: the knife had penetrated the heart. Somerville had died instantaneously. Then came the turn of the police, and it soon became evident in what direction their suspicions lay. Blandish made no attempt to hide the fact of his quarrel with the dead man. It would have been futile in view of the fact that Merrick and I had seen it. But he flatly refused to say what it was about, and he denied absolutely that he was the man who had done it.

'Nobody said you were, sir,' said the Inspector, sternly. 'You go too fast.'

'Rot,' said Blandish, curtly. 'I'm not a damned fool. If I have a violent row with a man, and a few minutes later he is found dead, there's no good telling me that suspicion doesn't fall on me. Of course it does.'

And the next day suspicion became certainty. A finger-print expert arrived from Scotland Yard, and the marks of Blandish's fingers were found on the hilt of the knife. It was proof irrefutable, and the only explanation he could give was that in the heat of the argument he had snatched up the knife from the mantelpiece. But he still denied that it was he who had struck the blow.

'Then how comes it that yours are the *only* prints on the knife?' said the Inspector, quietly.

I think the only person who believed in his innocence through the days that followed was Mary. To us it was painfully, terrible clear. As I said to Merrick the night before the trial, it was the most obvious case, short of having an eyewitness, that could be put before a jury. And he agreed. He and I, of course, were two of the principal witnesses for the prosecution, but our evidence was really unnecessary. Blandish had never denied the fact that he and the murdered man had had a bitter quarrel. That and the finger-prints on the knife formed the evidence against him.

He still refused to say what the quarrel was about, though we all of us knew it concerned Mary. And from the point of view of his innocence or guilt it didn't really matter. He and the murdered man had quarrelled over something, and in a fit of ungovernable rage Blandish had picked up the knife and stabbed him. That was all there was to it.

And that was all there was to it when counsel for the Crown had finished his final speech. The members of the jury had obviously made up their minds already. It was difficult to see how they could have done otherwise. And Sir John Gordon—Blandish's counsel—was just rising to commence his hopeless task, when there occurred an amazing interruption. A strange, distraught-looking woman, carrying a brown box, forced her way into court and shouted out: 'Wait! Wait! Don't go on!' Her face seemed vaguely familiar to me, and suddenly I placed her. She was John Somerville's secretary.

Everybody was so astounded that she had reached Sir John before anyone could stop her. And by the time ushers and attendants had rushed up to her, she had said enough to Sir John to cause him to wave them away.

'My Lord,' he said, 'this woman has just made a most important statement to me. In spite of the irregularity of the proceedings I propose to put her in the witness-box.'

And so Emily Turner was duly sworn, and made her statement. And when she had finished you could have heard a pin drop in the court.

'I understand,' said the Judge, 'that the position is as follows. The box in front of Sir John is the instrument which the murdered man used for dictating his letters into. This morning, not having thought of it since the night of the tragedy, you opened the box. And you found that a record had been made. You thereupon played that record, if that is the correct phrase, and you discovered that the conversation between prisoner at the bar and the murdered man was what was recorded. Is that correct?'

'Yes, my Lord.'

And then came a harsh voice from the dock: 'Smash the thing, I tell you. Smash it.'

'Silence,' said the Judge, sternly, and Miles Blandish faced him steadily.

'My Lord,' he remarked, 'I give you my solemn word of honour that my conversation with Somerville that night had nothing to do with it. Moreover, it affects a third person. Therefore need that record be given?'

'It must certainly be given,' said the Judge. 'If what this witness says is correct, a vital piece of evidence has just come to light. Turn on the machine.'

I can still see that scene. Miles Blandish, impassive and erect; the jury tense and expectant; the public craning forward in their seats. And the centre of everything—that plain little woman bending over the box.

There came a faint scraping like a gramophone. Then it started.

'Sir, with reference to your last quotation, I beg to state——'

John Somerville's voice: God! it was uncanny. Things began to blur a bit before my eyes. John Somerville dictating a letter.

'May I have a few words with you, Somerville?'

A gasp ran through the court—instantly quelled. Miles Blandish has spoken. The living and the dead—reproduced before us.

'Certainly, Blandish.'

'There is not much good beating about the bush, Somerville. Your wife and I are in love with one another.'

'How excessively interesting.'

How well I knew that cold, sneering tone of Somerville's. I could see now the slight rise of his upper lip. I could see the man himself again, as I hadn't seen him since that night—as I'd never expected to see him. He was dead, damn it! dead. And that cursed instrument had brought him to life again. What was he saying now?

'I certainly can't prevent my wife going away with you, Blandish. But it's going to be a little awkward for you both. Divorce proceedings bore me, and I hate being bored.'

'You mean you won't divorce her, Somerville?'

'You damned swine. You utterly damned swine.'

There came a pause, then Somerville's voice with fear in it.

'Put down that knife, you fool. Put down that knife.'

I hadn't told them that: I'd kept that dark. I'd seen Blandish pick up the knife—seen it myself. Just as he said.

'And now clear out, blast you.'

Somerville's voice again—icy, contemptuous. How I'd hated his voice, the thin-lipped swine. And it was then I remembered.

'Stop it!' I screamed. 'Stop it!'

People stared at me in amazement, and suddenly I felt icy calm. The machine scraped on, then—

'Hullo, Canford! What do you want? I'm busy.'

Somerville's voice: he'd said it to me as I entered the room.

'What the devil——Oh! my God!'

Followed a little sobbing grunt: then silence. The record was over.

Yes! I did it. I'd always loathed him, and I loathed Blandish worse. Because Mary loved Blandish, and I loved Mary. And when Blandish rushed out past me into the night I saw my chance to get them both. I wrapped a handkerchief round the hilt of the knife to prevent finger-prints: I'd thought of everything.

Everything except that cursed machine.

THE BIBULOUS BUSINESS OF A MATTER OF TASTE

By Dorothy Sayers

'Halte-là! . . . Attention! . . . F——e!'

The young man in the grey suit pushed his way through the protesting porters and leapt nimbly for the footboard of the guard's van as the Paris–Evreux express steamed out of the Invalides. The guard, with an eye to a tip, fielded him adroitly from among the detaining hands.

'It is happy for monsieur that he is so agile,' he remarked. 'Monsieur is in a hurry?'

'Somewhat. Thank you. I can get through by the corridor?'

'But certainly. The *premières* are two coaches away, beyond the luggage-van.'

The young man rewarded his rescuer, and made his way forward, mopping his face. As he passed the piled-up luggage, something caught his eye, and he stopped to investigate. It was a suit-case, nearly new, of expensive-looking leather, labelled conspicuously:

LORD PETER WIMSEY,
Hôtel Saumon d'Or,
Verneuil-sur-Eure.

and bore witness to its itinerary thus:

LONDON — PARIS
(Waterloo) (Gare St. Lazare)
via Southampton-Havre.
PARIS — VERNEUIL
(Ch. de Fer de l'Ouest)

The young man whistled, and sat down on a trunk to think it out.

Somewhere there had been a leakage, and they were on his trail. Nor did they care who knew it. There were hundreds of people in London and Paris who would know the name of Wimsey, not counting the police of both countries. In addition to belonging to one of the oldest ducal families in England, Lord Peter had made himself conspicuous by his meddling with crime detection. A label like this was a gratuitous advertisement.

But the amazing thing was that the pursuers were not troubling to hide themselves from the pursued. That argued very great confidence. That he should have got into the guard's van was, of course, an accident, but, even so, he might have seen it on the platform, or anywhere.

An accident? It occurred to him—not for the first time, but definitely now, and without doubt—that it was indeed an accident for them that he was here. The series of maddening delays that had held him up between London and the Invalides presented itself to him with an air of pre-arrangement. The preposterous accusation, for instance, of the woman who had accosted him in Piccadilly, and the slow process of extricating himself at Marlborough Street. It was easy to hold a man up on some trumped-up charge till an important plan had matured. Then there was the lavatory door at Waterloo, which had so ludicrously locked itself upon him. Being athletic, he had climbed over the partition, to find the attendant mysteriously absent. And, in Paris, was it by chance that he had had a deaf taxi-driver, who mistook the direction 'Quai d'Orléans'

for 'Gare de Lyon,' and drove a mile and a half in the wrong direction before the shouts of his fare attracted his attention? They were clever, the pursuers, and circumspect. They had accurate information; they would delay him, but without taking any overt step; they knew that, if only they could keep time on their side, they needed no other ally.

Did they know he was on the train? If not, he still kept the advantage, for they would travel in a false security, thinking him to be left, raging and helpless, in the Invalides. He decided to make a cautious reconnaissance.

The first step was to change his grey suit for another of inconspicuous navy-blue cloth, which he had in his small black bag. This he did in the privacy of the toilet, substituting for his grey soft hat a large travelling-cap, which pulled well down over his eyes.

There was little difficulty in locating the man he was in search of. He found him seated in the inner corner of a first-class compartment, facing the engine, so that the watcher could approach unseen from behind. On the rack was a handsome dressing-case, with the initials P. D. B. W. The young man was familiar with Wimsey's narrow, beaky face, flat yellow hair, and insolent dropped eyelids. He smiled a little grimly.

'He is confident,' he thought, 'and has regrettably made the mistake of underrating the enemy. Good! This is where I retire into a *seconde* and keep my eyes open. The next act of this melodrama will take place, I fancy, at Dreux.'

. . . . . .

It is a rule on the Chemin de Fer de l'Ouest that all Paris–Evreux trains, whether of Grande Vitesse or what Lord Peter Wimsey preferred to call Grande Paresse, shall halt for an interminable period at Dreux. The young man (now in navy-blue) watched his quarry safely into the refreshment-room, and slipped unobtrusively out of the station. In a quarter of an hour he was back—this time in a heavy motoring-coat, helmet, and goggles, at the wheel of a powerful hired Peugeot. Coming quietly on to the platform, he took up his station behind the wall of the *lampisterie*, whence he could keep an eye on the train and the buffet door. After fifteen minutes his patience was rewarded by the sight of his man again boarding the express, dressing-case in hand. The porters slammed the doors, crying: 'Next stop Verneuil!' The engine panted and groaned; the long train of grey-green carriages clanked slowly away. The motorist drew a breath of satisfaction, and, hurrying past the barrier, started up the car. He knew that he had a good eighty miles an hour under his bonnet, and there is no speed-limit in France.

. . . . . .

Mon Souci, the seat of that eccentric and eremitical genius the Comte de Rueil, is situated three kilometres from Verneuil. It is a sorrowful and decayed château, desolate at the termination of its neglected avenue of pines. The mournful state of a nobility without an allegiance surrounds it. The stone nymphs droop greenly over their dry and mouldering fountains. An occasional peasant creaks with a single waggon-load of wood along the ill-forested glades. It has the atmosphere of sunset

at all hours of the day. The woodwork is dry and gaping for lack of paint. Through the jalousies one sees the prim *salon*, with its beautiful and faded furniture. Even the last of its ill-dressed, ill-favoured women has withered away from Mon Souci, with her in-bred, exaggerated features and her long white gloves. But at the rear of the château a chimney smokes incessantly. It is the furnace of the laboratory, the only living and modern thing among the old and dying; the only place tended and loved, petted and spoiled, heir to the long solicitude which counts of a more light-hearted day had given to stable and kennel, portrait-gallery and ballroom. And below, in the cool cellar, lie row upon row the dusty bottles, each an enchanted glass coffin in which the Sleeping Beauty of the vine grows ever more ravishing in sleep.

As the Peugeot came to a standstill in the courtyard, the driver observed with considerable surprise that he was not the count's only visitor. An immense super-Renault, like a *merveilleuse* of the Directoire, all bonnet and no body, had been drawn so ostentatiously across the entrance as to embarrass the approach of any new-comer. Its glittering panels were embellished with a coat of arms, and the count's elderly servant was at that moment staggering beneath the weight of two large and elaborate suit-cases, bearing in silver letters that could be read a mile away the legend: 'Lord Peter Wimsey.'

The Peugeot driver gazed with astonishment at this display, and grinned sardonically. 'Lord Peter seems rather ubiquitous in this country,' he observed to himself. Then, taking pen and paper from

his bag, he busied himself with a little letter-writing. By the time that the suit-cases had been carried in, and the Renault had purred its smooth way to the outbuildings, the document was complete and enclosed in an envelope addressed to the Comte de Rueil. 'The hoist with his own petard touch,' said the young man, and, stepping up to the door, presented the envelope to the manservant.

'I am the bearer of a letter of introduction to monsieur le comte,' he said. 'Will you have the obligingness to present it to him? My name is Bredon—Death Bredon.'

The man bowed, and begged him to enter.

'If monsieur will have the goodness to seat himself in the hall for a few moments. Monsieur le comte is engaged with another gentleman, but I will lose no time in making monsieur's arrival known.'

The young man sat down and waited. The windows of the hall looked out upon the entrance, and it was not long before the château's sleep was disturbed by the hooting of yet another motor-horn. A station taxi-cab came noisily up the avenue. The man from the first-class carriage and the luggage labelled P. D. B. W. were deposited upon the door-step. Lord Peter Wimsey dismissed the driver and rang the bell.

'Now,' said Mr. Bredon, 'the fun is going to begin.' He effaced himself as far as possible in the shadow of a tall *armoire normande*.

'Good evening,' said the new-comer to the manservant, in admirable French, 'I am Lord Peter Wimsey. I arrive upon the invitation of Monsieur le comte de Rueil. Monsieur le comte is at liberty?'

'Milord Peter Wimsey? Pardon, monsieur, but I

do not understand. Milord de Wimsey is already arrived and is with monsieur le comte at this moment.'

'You surprise me,' said the other, with complete imperturbability, 'for certainly no one but myself has any right to that name. It seems as though some person more ingenious than honest has had the bright idea of impersonating me.'

The servant was clearly at a loss.

'Perhaps,' he suggested, 'monsieur can show his *papiers d'identité*.'

'Although it is somewhat unusual to produce one's credentials on the doorstep when paying a private visit,' replied his lordship, with unaltered good humour, 'I have not the slightest objection. Here is my passport, here is a *permis de séjour* granted to me in Paris, here my visiting-card, and here a quantity of correspondence addressed to me at the Hôtel Meurice, Paris, at my flat in Piccadilly, London, at the Marlborough Club, London, and at my brother's house at King's Denver. Is that sufficiently in order?'

The servant perused the documents carefully, appearing particularly impressed by the *permis de séjour*.

'It appears there is some mistake,' he murmured dubiously; 'if monsieur will follow me, I will acquaint monsieur le comte.'

They disappeared through the folding doors at the back of the hall, and Bredon was left alone.

'Quite a little boom in Richmonds to-day,' he observed, 'each of us more unscrupulous than the last. The occasion obviously calls for a refined subtlety of method.'

After what he judged to be a hectic ten minutes in the count's library, the servant reappeared, searching for him.

'Monsieur le comte's compliments, and would monsieur step this way?'

Bredon entered the room with a jaunty step. He had created for himself the mastery of this situation. The count, a thin, elderly man, his fingers deeply stained with chemicals, sat, with a perturbed expression, at his desk. In two arm-chairs sat the two Wimseys. Bredon noted that, while the Wimsey he had seen in the train (whom he mentally named Peter I) retained his unruffled smile, Peter II (he of the Renault) had the flushed and indignant air of an Englishman affronted. The two men were superficially alike—both fair, lean, and long-nosed, with the nondescript, inelastic face which predominates in any assembly of well-bred Anglo-Saxons.

'Mr. Bredon,' said the count, 'I am charmed to have the pleasure of making your acquaintance, and regret that I must at once call upon you for a service as singular as it is important. You have presented to me a letter of introduction from your cousin, Lord Peter Wimsey. Will you now be good enough to inform me which of these gentlemen he is?'

Bredon let his glance pass slowly from the one claimant to the other, meditating what answer would best serve his own ends. One, at any rate, of the men in this room was a formidable intellect, trained in the detection of imposture.

'Well?' said Peter II. 'Are you going to acknowledge me, Bredon?'

Peter I extracted a cigarette from a silver case.

'Your confederate does not seem very well up in his part,' he remarked, with a quiet smile at Peter II.

'Monsieur le comte,' said Bredon, 'I regret extremely that I cannot assist you in the matter. My acquaintance with my cousin, like your own, has been made and maintained entirely through correspondence on a subject of common interest. My profession,' he added, 'has made me unpopular with my family.'

There was a very slight sigh of relief somewhere. The false Wimsey—whichever he was—had gained a respite. Bredon smiled.

'An excellent move, Mr. Bredon,' said Peter I, 'but it will hardly explain——Allow me.' He took the letter from the count's hesitating hand. 'It will hardly explain the fact that the ink of this letter of recommendation, dated three weeks ago, is even now scarcely dry—though I congratulate you on the very plausible imitation of my handwriting.'

'If *you* can forge my handwriting,' said Peter II, 'so can this Mr. Bredon.' He read the letter aloud over his double's shoulder.

"'Monsieur le comte—I have the honour to present to you my friend and cousin, Mr. Death Bredon, who, I understand, is to be travelling in your part of France next month. He is very anxious to view your interesting library. Although a journalist by profession, he really knows something about books." I am delighted to learn for the first time that I have such a cousin. An interviewer's trick, I fancy, monsieur le comte. Fleet Street appears well informed about our family names. Possibly it is equally well informed about the object of my visit to Mon Souci?'

'If,' said Bredon boldly, 'you refer to the acquisition of the de Rueil formula for poison gas for the British Government, I can answer for my own knowledge, though possibly the rest of Fleet Street is less completely enlightened.' He weighed his words carefully now, warned by his slip. The sharp eyes and detective ability of Peter I alarmed him far more than the caustic tongue of Peter II.

The count uttered an exclamation of dismay.

'Gentlemen,' he said, 'one thing is obvious—that there has been somewhere a disastrous leakage of information. Which of you is the Lord Peter Wimsey to whom I should entrust the formula I do not know. Both of you are supplied with papers of identity; both appear completely instructed in this matter; both of your handwritings correspond with the letters I have previously received from Lord Peter, and both of you have offered me the sum agreed upon in Bank of England notes. In addition, this third gentleman arrives endowed with an equal facility in handwritings, an introductory letter surrounded by most suspicious circumstances, and a degree of acquaintance with this whole matter which alarms me. I can see but one solution. All of you must remain here at the château while I send to England for some elucidation of this mystery. To the genuine Lord Peter I offer my apologies, and assure him that I will endeavour to make his stay as agreeable as possible. Will this satisfy you? It will? I am delighted to hear it. My servants will show you to your bedrooms, and dinner will be ready at half-past seven.'

. . . . . .

'It is delightful to think,' said Mr. Bredon, as he

fingered his glass and passed it before his nostrils with the air of a connoisseur, 'that whichever of these gentlemen has the right to the name which he assumes is assured to-night of a truly Olympian satisfaction.' His impudence had returned to him, and he challenged the company with an air. 'Your cellars, monsieur le comte, are as well known among men endowed with a palate as your talents among men of science. No eloquence could say more.'

The two Lord Peters murmured assent.

'I am the more pleased by your commendation,' said the count, 'that it suggests to me a little test which, with your kind co-operation, will, I think, assist us very much in determining which of you gentlemen is Lord Peter Wimsey and which his talented impersonator. Is it not matter of common notoriety that Lord Peter has a palate for wine almost unequalled in Europe?'

'You flatter me, monsieur le comte,' said Peter II modestly.

'I wouldn't like to say unequalled,' said Peter I, chiming in like a well-trained duet; 'let's call it fair to middling. Less liable to misconstruction and all that.'

'Your lordship does yourself an injustice,' said Bredon, addressing both men with impartial deference. 'The bet which you won from Mr. Frederick Arbuthnot at the Egotists' Club, when he challenged you to name the vintage years of seventeen wines blindfold, received its due prominence in the *Evening Wire*.'

'I was in extra form that night,' said Peter I.

'A fluke,' laughed Peter II.

'The test I propose, gentlemen, is on similar

lines,' pursued the count, 'though somewhat less strenuous. There are six courses ordered for dinner to-night. With each we will drink a different wine, which my butler shall bring in with the label concealed. You shall each in turn give me your opinion upon the vintage. By this means we shall perhaps arrive at something, since the most brilliant forger —of whom I gather I have at least two at my table to-night—can scarcely forge a palate for wine. If too hazardous a mixture of wines should produce a temporary incommodity in the morning, you will, I feel sure, suffer it gladly for this once in the cause of truth.'

The two Wimseys bowed.

'*In vino veritas*,' said Mr. Bredon, with a laugh. He at least was well seasoned, and foresaw opportunities for himself.

'Accident, and my butler, having placed you at my right hand, monsieur,' went on the count, addressing Peter I, 'I will ask you to begin by pronouncing, as accurately as may be, upon the wine which you have just drunk.'

'That is scarcely a searching ordeal,' said the other, with a smile. 'I can say definitely that it is a very pleasant and well-matured Chablis Moutonne; and, since ten years is an excellent age for a Chablis—a real Chablis—I should vote for 1916, which was perhaps the best of the war vintages in that district.'

'Have you anything to add to that opinion, monsieur?' inquired the count, deferentially, of Peter II.

'I wouldn't like to be dogmatic to a year or so,' said that gentleman critically, 'but if I must com-

mit myself, don't you know, I should say 1915—decidedly 1915.'

The count bowed, and turned to Bredon.

'Perhaps you, too, monsieur, would be interested to give an opinion,' he suggested, with the exquisite courtesy always shown to the plain man in the society of experts.

'I'd rather not set a standard which I might not be able to live up to,' replied Bredon, a little maliciously. 'I know that it is 1915, for I happened to see the label.'

Peter II looked a little disconcerted.

'We will arrange matters better in future,' said the count, 'Pardon me.' He stepped apart for a few moments' conference with the butler, who presently advanced to remove the oysters and bring in the soup.

The next candidate for attention arrived swathed to the lip in damask.

'It is your turn to speak first, monsieur,' said the count to Peter II. 'Permit me to offer you an olive to cleanse the palate. No haste, I beg. Even for the most excellent political ends, good wine must not be used with disrespect.'

The rebuke was not unnecessary, for, after a preliminary sip, Peter II had taken a deep draught of the heady white richness. Under Peter I's quizzical eye he wilted quite visibly.

'It is—it is Sauterne,' he began, and stopped. Then, gathering encouragement from Bredon's smile, he said, with more aplomb, 'Château Yquem, 1911—ah! the queen of white wines, sir, as what's-his-name says.' He drained his glass defiantly.

The count's face was a study as he slowly de-

tached his fascinated gaze from Peter II to fix it on Peter I.

'If I had to be impersonated by somebody,' murmured the latter gently, 'it would have been more flattering to have had it undertaken by a person to whom all white wines were *not* alike. Well now, sir, this admirable vintage is, of course, a Montrachet of—let me see'—he rolled the wine delicately upon his tongue—'of 1911. And a very attractive wine it is, though, with all due deference to yourself, monsieur le comte, I feel that it is perhaps slightly too sweet to occupy its present place in the menu. True, with this excellent *consommé marmite*, a sweetish wine is not altogether out of place, but, in my own humble opinion, it would have shown to better advantage with the *confitures*.'

'There, now,' said Bredon innocently, 'it just shows how one may be misled. Had not I had the advantage of Lord Peter's expert opinion—for certainly nobody who could mistake Montrachet for Sauterne has any claim to the name of Wimsey—I should have pronounced this to be, not the Montrachet-Aîné, but the Chevalier-Montrachet of the same year, which is a trifle sweeter. But no doubt, as your lordship says, drinking it with the soup has caused it to appear sweeter to me than it actually is.'

The count looked sharply at him, but made no comment.

'Have another olive,' said Peter I kindly. 'You can't judge wine if your mind is on other flavours.'

'Thanks frightfully,' said Bredon. 'And that reminds me——' He launched into a rather pointless story about olives, which lasted out the soup

and bridged the interval to the entrance of an exquisitely cooked sole.

The count's eye followed the pale amber wine rather thoughtfully as it trilled into the glasses. Bredon raised his in the approved manner to his nostrils, and his face flushed a little. With the first sip he turned excitedly to his host.

'Good God, sir ——' he began.

The lifted hand cautioned him to silence.

Peter I sipped, inhaled, sipped again, and his brows clouded. Peter II had by this time apparently abandoned his pretensions. He drank thirstily, with a beaming smile and a lessening hold upon reality.

'Eh bien, monsieur?' inquired the count gently.

'This,' said Peter I, 'is certainly hock, and the noblest hock I have ever tasted, but I must admit that for the moment I cannot precisely place it.'

'No?' said Bredon. His voice was like bean-honey now, sweet and harsh together. 'Nor the other gentleman? And yet I fancy I could place it within a couple of miles, though it is a wine I had hardly looked to find in a French cellar at this time. It is hock, as your lordship says, and at that it is Johannisberger. Not the plebeian cousin, but the *echter* Schloss Johannisberger from the castle vineyard itself. Your lordship must have missed it (to your great loss) during the war years. My father laid some down the year before he died, but it appears that the ducal cellars at Denver were less well furnished.'

'I must set about remedying the omission,' said the remaining Peter, with determination.

The *poulet* was served to the accompaniment of

an argument over the Lafitte, his lordship placing it at 1878, Bredon maintaining it to be a relic of the glorious 'seventy-fives, slightly over-matured, but both agreeing as to its great age and noble pedigree.

As to the Clos-Vougeôt, on the other hand, there was complete agreement; after a tentative suggestion of 1915, it was pronounced finally by Peter I to belong to the equally admirable though slightly lighter 1911 crop. The *pré-salé* was removed amid general applause, and the dessert was brought in.

'Is it necessary,' asked Peter I, with a slight smile in the direction of Peter II—now happily murmuring 'Damn good wine, damn good dinner, damn good show'—'is it necessary to prolong this farce any further?'

'Your lordship will not, surely, refuse to proceed with the discussion?' cried the count.

'The point is sufficiently made, I fancy.'

'But no one will surely ever refuse to discuss wine,' said Bredon, 'least of all your lordship, who is so great an authority.'

'Not on this,' said the other. 'Frankly, it is a wine I do not care about. It is sweet and coarse, qualities that would damn any wine in the eyes — the mouth, rather—of a connoisseur. Did your excellent father have this laid down also, Mr. Bredon?'

Bredon shook his head.

'No,' he said, 'no. Genuine Imperial Tokay is beyond the opportunities of Grub Street, I fear. Though I agree with you that it is horribly overrated —with all due deference to yourself, monsieur le comte.'

'In that case,' said the count, 'we will pass at

once to the liqueur. I admit that I had thought of puzzling these gentlemen with the local product, but, since one competitor seems to have scratched, it shall be brandy—the only fitting close to a good wine-list.'

In a slightly embarrassing silence the huge, round-bellied balloon glasses were set upon the table, and the few precious drops poured gently into each and set lightly swinging to release the bouquet.

'This,' said Peter I, charmed again into amiability, 'is, indeed, a wonderful old French brandy. Half a century old, I suppose.'

'Your lordship's praise lacks warmth,' replied Bredon. 'This is *the* brandy—the brandy of brandies—the superb—the incomparable—the true Napoleon. It should be honoured like the emperor it is.'

He rose to his feet, his napkin in his hand.

'Sir,' said the count, turning to him, 'I have on my right a most admirable judge of wine, but you are unique.' He motioned to Pierre, who solemnly brought forward the empty bottles, unswathed now, from the humble Chablis to the stately Napoleon, with the imperial seal blown in the glass. 'Every time you have been correct as to growth and year. There cannot be six men in the world with such a palate as yours, and I thought that but one of them was an Englishman. Will you not favour us this time, with your real name?'

'It doesn't matter what his name is,' said Peter I. He rose. 'Put up your hands, all of you. Count, the formula!'

Bredon's hands came up with a jerk, still clutch-

ing the napkin. The white folds spurted flame as his shot struck the other's revolver cleanly between trigger and barrel, exploding the charge, to the extreme detriment of the glass chandelier. Peter I stood shaking his paralysed hand and cursing.

Bredon kept him covered while he cocked a wary eye at Peter II, who, his rosy visions scattered by the report, seemed struggling back to aggressiveness.

'Since the entertainment appears to be taking a lively turn,' observed Bredon, 'perhaps you would be so good, count, as to search these gentlemen for further firearms. Thank you. Now, why should we not all sit down again and pass the bottle round?'

'You—*you* are——' growled Peter I.

'Oh, my name is Bredon all right,' said the young man cheerfully. 'I loathe aliases. Like another fellow's clothes, you know—never seem quite to fit. Peter Death Bredon Wimsey—a bit lengthy and all that, but handy when taken in instalments. I've got a passport and all those things, too, but I didn't offer them, as their reputation here seems a little blown upon, so to speak. As regards the formula, I think I'd better give you my personal cheque for it—all sorts of people seem able to go about flourishing Bank of England notes. Personally, I think all this secret diplomacy work is a mistake, but that's the War Office's pigeon. I suppose we all brought similar credentials. Yes, I thought so. Some bright person seems to have sold himself very successfully in two places at once. But you two must have been having a lively time, each thinking the other was me.'

'My lord,' said the count heavily, 'these two men

are, or were, Englishmen, I suppose. I do not care to know what Governments have purchased their treachery. But where they stand, I, alas! stand too. To our venal and corrupt Republic I, as a Royalist, acknowledge no allegiance. But it is in my heart that I have agreed to sell my country to England because of my poverty. Go back to your War Office and say I will not give you the formula. If war should come between our countries—which may God avert!—I will be found on the side of France. That, my lord, is my last word.'

Wimsey bowed.

'Sir,' said he, 'it appears that my mission has, after all, failed. I am glad of it. This trafficking in destruction is a dirty kind of business after all. Let us shut the door upon these two, who are neither flesh nor fowl, and finish the brandy in the library.'

THE FIVE OF SWORDS

By G. K. Chesterton

It was doubtless a strange coincidence that the two friends, the Frenchman and the Englishman, should have argued about that particular subject on that particular morning. The coincidence may perhaps appear less incredible to a philosophic mind, if I add that they had argued about that subject every morning through the whole month of the walking tour that they took in the country south of Fontainebleau. Indeed, it was this repetition and variety of aspect that gave the more logical and patient mind of the Frenchman the occasion of his final criticism.

'My friend,' he said, 'you have told me many times that you can make no sense of the French duel. Permit me the observation that I can make no sense of the English criticism of the French duel. When we discussed it yesterday, for instance, you twitted me with the affair of old Le Mouton with that Jew journalist who calls himself Vallon. Because the poor old Senator got off with a scratch on the wrist, you called it a farce.'

'And you can't deny it was a farce,' replied the other stolidly.

'But now,' proceeded his friend, 'because we happen to pass the Château d'Orage, you dig up the corpse of the old count who was killed there, God knows when, by a vagabond Austrian soldier of fortune, and tell me with a burst of British righteousness that it was a hideous tragedy.'

'Well, and you can't deny it was a tragedy,'

repeated the Englishman. 'They say the poor young countess couldn't live there in the shadow of it, and has sold the château and gone to Paris.'

'Paris has its religious consolations,' said the Frenchman, smiling somewhat austerely. 'But I think you are unreasonable. A thing cannot be bad because it is too dangerous and too safe. If the duel is bloodless you call our poor French swordsman a fool. If it end in bloodshed, what do you call him?'

'I call him a bloody fool,' replied the Englishman.

The two national figures might have served to show how real is nationality, and how independent it is of race; or at least of the physical types commonly associated with race. For Paul Forain was tall, thin, and fair, but French to the finger-tips, to the point of his imperial or the points of his long, narrow shoes, and in nothing more French than in a certain seriousness of curiosity that lifted his brow in a permanent furrow; you could see him thinking. And Harry Monk was short, sturdy, and dark, and yet exuberantly English—English in his grey tweeds and in his short brown moustache; and in nothing so English as in a complete absence of curiosity, so far as was consistent with courtesy. He carried the humour, and especially the good humour, of the English social compromise with him like a costume; just as one might fancy his grey tweeds carried the grey English weather with him everywhere through those sunny lands. They were both young, and both professors at a famous French college—the one of jurisprudence, the other of English; but the former, Forain, had specialized so much in certain aspects of criminal law that he was

often consulted on particular criminal problems. It was certain views of his about murder and manslaughter that had led to the recurrent disagreement about the duel. They commonly took their holidays together, and had just breakfasted at the inn of the Seven Stars half a mile along the road behind them.

Dawn had broken over the opposite side of the valley and shone full on the side on which their road ran. The ground fell towards the river in a series of tablelands like a terraced garden, and on the one just above them were the neglected grounds and sombre façade of the old château, flanked to left and right by an equally sombre façade of firs and pines, deployed interminably like the lost lances of an army long fallen into dust. The first shafts of the sun, still tinged with red, gleamed on a row of glass frames for cucumbers or some such vegetables, suggesting that the place was at least lately inhabited, and warmed the dark diamonded casements of the house itself, here and there turning a diamond into a ruby. But the garden was overgrown with clumps of wood almost as accidental as giant mosses, and somewhere in its melancholy maze, they knew, the sinister Colonel Tarnow, an Austrian soldier, since not unsuspected of being an Austrian spy, had thrust his blade into the throat of Maurice d'Orage, the last lord of that place. The park descended, and the view over the hedge was soon shut out by a great garden wall so loaded with ivies and ancient vines and creepers that it looked itself more like a hedge than a wall.

'I know you've been out yourself, and I know you're far from being a brute yourself,' conceded Monk, continuing the conversation. 'For my own

part, however much I hated a man, I don't fancy I should ever want to kill him.'

'I don't know that I did want to kill him,' answered the other. 'It would be truer to say I wanted him to kill me. You see, I wanted him to be *able* to kill me. That is what is not understood. To show how much I would stake on my side of the quarrel—hallo! What on earth is this?'

On the ivied wall above had appeared a figure, almost black against the morning sky, so that they could see nothing of its face, but only its one frenzied gesture. The next moment it had leapt from the wall and stood in their path, with hands spread out as if for succour.

'Are you doctors, either of you?' cried the unknown. 'Anyhow, you must come and help—a man's been killed.'

They could see now that the figure was that of a slim young man whose dark hair and dark clothes showed the abrupt disorder only seen in what is commonly orderly. One curl of his burnished black hair had been plucked across his eye by an intercepting branch, and he wore pale yellow gloves, one of which was burst across the knuckles.

'A man killed?' repeated Monk. 'How was he killed?'

The yellow-gloved hand made a despairing movement.

'Oh, the wretched old tale!' he cried. 'Too much wine, too many words, and the end next morning. But God knows we never meant it to go so far as this!'

With one of the lightning movements that lay hidden behind his rather dry dignity, Forain had

already scaled the low wall and was standing on it, and his English friend followed with equal activity and more unconcern. As soon as they stood there they saw on the lawn below the sight that explained everything, and made so wild and yet apt a commentary on their own controversy.

The group on the lawn included three other men in black frockcoats and top hats, excluding the messenger of misfortune, whose own silk hat lay rolled at random by the wall over which he had leapt. He seemed to have leapt it, by the way, with an impetuosity that spoke of a swift reaction of horror or repentance, for Forain noticed, only a yard or two along the garden wall, a garden door, which, though doubtless disused, rustily barred and blotched with lichen, would have been the natural exit of a more normal moment. But the eye was very reasonably riveted on the two figures, clad only in white shirts and trousers, round whom the rest revolved, and who must have crossed swords a moment before. One of these stood with the rapier still poised in his hand, a mere streak of white, which a keen eye might have seen to end in a spot of red. The other white-shirted figure lay like a white rag on the green turf, and a sword of the same pattern, a somewhat antiquated one, lay gleaming in the grass where it had fallen from his hand. One of his black coated seconds was bending over him, and as the strangers approached lifted a livid face, a face with spectacles and a black triangular beard.

'It's too late,' he said. 'He's gone.'

The man still holding the sword cast it down with a wordless sound more shocking than a curse. He was a tall, elegant man, with an air of fashion even

in his duelling undress; his face, with a rather fine aquiline profile, looked whiter against red hair and a red pointed beard. The man beside him put a hand upon his shoulder and seemed to push him a little, perhaps urging him to fly. This witness, in the French phrase, was a tall, portly man with a long black beard cut as if in the square pattern of his long black frockcoat, and having, somewhat incongruously, a monocle screwed into one eye. The last of the group, the second of the slayer's formal backers, stood motionless and somewhat apart from the rest—a big man, much younger than his comrades, and with a classical face like a statue's and almost as impassive as a statue's. By a movement common to the whole tragic company, he had removed his top hat at the final announcement, as if at a funeral, and the effect gave to English eyes a slight shock; for the young man's hair was cropped so close and so colourless that he might almost have been bald. The fashion was common enough in France, yet it seemed incongruous to the man's youth and good looks. It was as if Apollo were shaved as an Eastern hermit.

'Gentlemen,' said Forain at last, 'since you have brought me into this terrible business, I must be plain. I am in no position to be pharisaic. I have all but killed a man myself, and I know that the riposte can be almost past control. I am not,' he added, with a faint touch of acidity, 'a humanitarian, who would have three men butchered with the axe of the guillotine because one has fallen by the sword. I am not an official, but I have some official influence; and I have, if I may say so, a reputation to lose. You must at least convince me that this

affair was clean and inevitable like my own, otherwise I must go back to my friend and innkeeper of the Seven Stars, who will put me in communication with another friend of mine, the chief of police.'

And without further apology, he walked across the lawn and looked down at the fallen figure, a figure peculiarly pathetic because plainly younger than any of the survivors, even his second who had run for help. There was no hair on the pale face; the hair on the head was very fair and brushed in a way which Monk, with a new shock of sympathy, recognized as English. There was no doubt of the death; a brief examination showed that the sword had been sent straight through the heart.

The big man with the big black beard broke the silence in reply:

'I will thank you, sir, for your candour, since I am, in some melancholy sense, your host on this occasion. I am Baron Bruno, owner of this house and grounds, and it was here at my table that the mortal insult was given. I owe it to my unfortunate friend Le Caron'—and he made a gesture of introduction towards the red-bearded swordsman, 'to say it was a mortal insult, and followed by a direct challenge. It was a charge of cheating at cards, and it was clinched by one of cowardice. I mean no harshness to the dead, but something is due to the living.'

Monk turned to the dead man's seconds. 'Do you support this?' he demanded.

'I suppose it 's all right,' said the young man with the yellow gloves. 'There were faults on both sides.'

Then he added abruptly: 'My name is Waldo Lorraine, and I'm ashamed to say I am the fool who

brought my poor friend here to play. He was an Englishman, Hubert Crane, whom I met in Paris, and meant, heaven knows, only to give a good time! And the only service I've done him is to be his second in this bloody ending. Dr. Vandam here, being also a stranger in the house, kindly acted as my colleague. The duel was regular enough, I must fairly say, but the quarrel was——' He paused, a shadow of shame darkening his dark face. 'I have to confess I was no judge of it, and have no memory but a sort of nightmare. In plain words, I had drunk too much to know or care.'

Dr. Vandam, the pale man in the spectacles, shook his head mournfully, still staring at the corpse.

'I can't help you,' he said. 'I was at the Seven Stars, and only came in time to arrange for the fight.'

'My own fellow-witness, M. Valence,' observed the baron, indicating the man with the cropped hair, 'will ratify my version of the dispute.'

'Had he any papers?' asked Forain after a pause. 'May I examine the body?'

There was no opposition, and, after searching the dead man and his waistcoat and coat that lay on the lawn, the investigator at last found a single letter, short but confirmatory, so far as it went, of the story told him. It was signed 'Abraham Crane', and was plainly from the dead man's father in Huddersfield: indeed, Monk was able to recognize the name as that of a noted manufacturing magnate in the north. It merely concerned business on which the young man had been sent to Paris, apparently to confirm some contract with the Paris branch of

the firm of Miller, Moss & Hartman; but the rather sharp adjuration to avoid the vanities of the French capital suggested that perhaps the father had some hint of the dissipations that had brought the son to his death. One thing only in this very commonplace letter puzzled the inquirer not a little. It ended by saying that the writer might himself be coming to France to hear the upshot of the Miller, Moss & Hartman affair, and that if so he would put up at the Seven Stars and call for his son at the Château d'Orage. It seemed odd that the son should have given the address of the very place where he was living the riotous life his father so strongly condemned. The only other object in the pockets besides the common necessaries was an old locket enclosing the faded portrait of a dark lady.

Forain stood frowning a moment, the paper twisted in his fingers; then he said abruptly: 'May I go up to your house, Monsieur le Baron?'

The baron bowed silently; they left the dead man's seconds to mount guard over his body, and the rest mounted slowly up the slope. They went the slower for two reasons—first, because the steep and straggling path was made more irregular by straggling roots of pine like the tails of dying dragons, and slippery with green slime that might have been their own green and unnatural gore; and second, because Forain stopped every now and then to take what seemed needless note of certain details of the general decay. Either the baron had not long been in possession of the place, or he cared very little for appearances.

What had once been a garden was eaten by giant weeds, and when they passed the cucumber frames

on the slope Forain saw they were empty and the glass of one of them had a careless crack, like a star in the ice. Forain stood staring at the hole for nearly a minute.

Entering the house by the long french windows, they came first on a round outer room with a round card-table. It might by the shape have been a turret-room, but seemed somehow as light and sunny as a summer-house, being white and gold in the ornate eighteenth-century style. But it was as faded as it was florid, and the white had grown yellow and the gold brown. At the moment this decay was but the background of the silent yet speaking drama of a more recent disorder. Cards were scattered across the floor and table, as if flung or struck flying from a hand that held them; champagne bottles stood or lay at random everywhere, half of them broken, nearly all of them empty; a chair was overturned. It was easy to believe all that Lorraine had said of the orgy that now seemed to him a nightmare.

'Not an edifying scene,' said the baron, with a sigh, 'and yet I suppose it has a moral.'

'It may appear singular,' replied Forain, 'but in my own moral problem it is even reassuring. Given the death, I am even glad of the drink.'

As he spoke he stooped swiftly and picked up a handful of cards from the carpet.

'The five of spades,' he said to Monk musingly in English, 'the five of swords, as the old Spaniards would say, I suppose. You know "spade" is "espada", a sword? The four of swords—spades, I mean. The three of spades. The—have you got a telephone here?'

'Yes—in another room, round by the other door of the house,' answered the baron, rather taken aback.

'I'll use it, if I may,' said Forain, and stepped swiftly out of the card-room. He strode across a larger and darker *salon* within, which for some reason had remained in a sterner and more antiquated style of decoration. There were antlers above him; a glimmer of armour showed on the gloom of oak and tapestry, and he saw one thing that arrested his eye as he strode towards the farther door. A trophy of two swords crossed was on one side of the fireplace, and on the corresponding place opposite the empty hooks of another. He understood why the two rapiers had seemed to be antiquated. Under the ominous empty hooks stood an ebony cabinet carved with cherubs as grotesque as goblins.

Forain felt as if the black cherubim were peering at him with a curiosity quite unangelic. He gazed a moment at the drawers of the cabinet, and passed on.

He shut the door behind him, and they heard another door close in a more distant part of the building, away towards the road that ran on the remoter side of the house. There was a silence; they could hear neither the bell nor the talk at the telephone.

Baron Bruno had dropped the glass from his eye, and was plucking a little nervously at his long dark beard.

'I suppose, sir,' he said, addressing Monk, 'we can count on your friend's feeling of honour?'

'I am certain of his honour,' said the Englishman, with the faintest accent on the possessive pronoun.

The surviving duellist, Le Caron, spoke for the first time, and roughly.

'Let the man telephone,' he said. 'No French jury would call this miserable thing murder. It was almost an accident.'

'One to be avoided, I think,' said Monk coldly.

Forain had reappeared, and his brow was cleared of its wrinkle of reflection. 'Baron,' he said, 'I have resolved my little problem. I will treat this tragedy as a private misfortune on one condition – that you all meet me and give me an account that satisfies me within this week, and in Paris. Say outside the Café Roncesvaux on Thursday night. Does that suit you? Is that understood? Very well, let us return to the garden.'

When they went out again through the french windows the sun was already high in heaven, and every detail of the slope and lawn below glittered with a new clarity. As they turned the corner of a clump of trees and came out above the duelling-ground, Forain stopped dead and put on the baron's arm a hand that caught like a hook.

'My God!' he said. 'This will never do. You must get away at once.'

'What?' cried the other.

'It 's been quick work,' said the investigator. 'The father 's here already.'

They followed his glance down to the garden by the wall, and the first thing they saw was that the rusty old garden door was standing open, letting in the white light of the road. Then they realized that a few yards within it was a tall, lean, grey-bearded man, clad completely in black and looking like some Puritanic minister. He was standing on the turf

and looking down at the dead. A girl in grey, with a black hat, was kneeling by the body, and the two seconds, as by an instinct of decency, had withdrawn to some distance and stood gazing gloomily at the ground. In the clear sunlight the whole group looked like a lighted scene on a green stage.

'Go back at once—all three of you,' said Forain almost fiercely. 'Get away by the other door. You must not meet *him*, at least.'

The baron, after an instant's hesitation, seemed to assent, and Le Caron had already turned away. The slayer and his two seconds moved towards the house and vanished into it once more, the tall young man with the shaven head going last with a leisure that made even his long legs look cynical. He was the only one of them who scarcely seemed affected at all.

'Mr. Crane, I think,' said Forain to the bereaved father. 'I fear you know all that we can tell you.'

The grey-bearded man nodded; there was a certain frost-bitten fierceness about his face and something wild in the eye contrasting with the control in the features, something that seemed natural enough at such a time, but which they found afterwards to be more normal to him even in ordinary times.

'Sir,' he said, 'I have seen the end of cards and wine and the Lord's judgements for everything I feared.' Then he added, with an incongruous simplicity somehow rather tragic than comic: 'And fencing, sir. I was always against all that French fad of getting prizes for fencing. Football is bad enough, with betting and every sort of brutality, but it doesn't lead to this. You are English, I

think?' he said abruptly to Monk. 'Have you anything to say of this abominable murder?'

'I say it is an abominable murder,' said Monk firmly. 'I was saying so to my friend hardly half an hour ago.'

'Ah, and you?' cried the old man, looking suspiciously at Forain. 'Were you defending duels, perhaps?'

'Sir,' replied Forain gently, 'it is no time for defending anything. If your son had fallen from a horse, I would not defend horses; you should say your worst of them. If he had been drowned in a boat, I would join you in wishing every boat at the bottom of the sea.'

The girl was looking at Forain with an innocent intensity of gaze which was curious and painful, but the father turned impatiently away, saying to Monk: 'As you are English at least, I should like to consult you.' And he drew the Englishman aside.

But the daughter still looked across at Forain without speech or motion, and he looked back at her with a rather indescribable interest. She was fair, like her brother, with yellow hair and a white face, but her features were irregular with that fairy luck that falls right once in fifty times, and then is more beautiful than beauty. Her eyes seemed as colourless as water, and yet as bright as diamonds, and when he met them the Frenchman realized, with a mounting and unmanageable emotion, that he was facing something far more positive than the laxity of the son or the limitations of the father.

'May I ask you, sir,' she said steadily, 'who were those three men with you just now? Were they the men who murdered him?'

'Mademoiselle,' he said, feeling somehow that all disguises had dropped, 'you use a harsh word, and heaven knows it is natural. But I must not stand before you on false pretences. I myself have held such a weapon and nearly done such a murder.'

'I don't think you look like a murderer,' she said calmly. 'But they did. That man with the red beard, he was like a wolf—a well-dressed wolf, which is the worst part of it. And that big, pompous man—what could he be but horrible, with his big black beard and a glass in one eye?'

'Surely,' said Forain respectfully, 'it is not wicked to be well dressed, and a man might be more sinned against than sinning and still have a beard and an eye-glass.'

'Not all that big beard and that one little eye-glass,' she replied positively. 'Oh, I only saw them in the distance, but I know quite well I'm right.'

'I know you must think any duellist is a criminal and ought to be punished,' said Forain rather huskily. 'Only, having been one myself——'

'I don't,' she said. 'I think those duellists ought to be punished. And, just to prove what I mean and don't mean' and her pale face was changed with a puzzling and yet dazzling smile—'I want you to punish them.'

There was a strange silence, and she added quietly:

'You have seen something yourself. You have some guess, I am sure, about how they came to fight, and what was really behind it all. You know there is really something wrong, much more wrong than the quarrel about cards.'

He bowed to her, and seemed to yield like a man rebuked by an old friend.

'Mademoiselle,' he said, 'I am honoured by your confidence. And your commission.'

He straightened himself equally abruptly, and turned to face the father, who had drawn near again in conversation with Monk.

'Mr. Crane,' he said gravely, 'I must ask you for the moment to trust me. This gentleman, as well as other countrymen of yours to whom I can refer you, will, I think, tell you that I can be trusted. I have already communicated with the authorities, and you may even regard me in a sense as their representative. I can answer for the fact that those responsible in this dreadful affair are under observation, and that justice can effect whatever may be found to be just. If you will honour me with an appointment in Paris after Thursday next, I can tell you more of many things that you ought to know. Meanwhile, I will make any arrangements you desire touching the formalities of respect for the dead.'

The eye of old Crane was still choleric, but he bowed, and Forain and Monk, returning the salutation, retraced their way up the path to the château. As they did so the Frenchman paused again by the cucumber frame and pointed to the broken glass.

'That 's the biggest hole in the story so far,' he said; 'it gapes at me like the mouth of hell.'

'That!' exclaimed his friend. 'That might have happened any time.'

'It happened this morning,' said Forain, 'or else—anyhow, the broken bits are fresh; nothing has grown round them. And there is the mark of a heel

on the soil inside. One of these men stepped straight on to the glass going down to the duelling ground. Why?'

'Oh, well,' observed Monk, 'that fellow Lorraine said he was blind drunk last night.'

'But not this morning,' replied Forain. 'And though a man blind drunk, even in broad daylight, might conceivably put his foot into a big glass frame right in front of him, I doubt if he could take it out again so neatly. If he were as drunk as that, I think the mantrap would trip and throw him, and there would be more broken glass. This does not look to me like a man who was blind drunk. It is more like a man who was blind——'

'Blind!' repeated Monk, with a quite irrational creeping of the flesh. 'But none of these men are blind. Is there any other explanation?'

'Yes,' replied Forain. 'They did it in the dark. And that is the darkest part of the business.'

Any one who had tracked the course of the two friends on the ensuing Thursday evening, when dusk had already kindled around them the many-coloured lights of Paris, might have imagined that they had no purpose but the visiting of a variety of cafés. Yet their course, though crooked and erratic, was designed according to the consistent strategy of the amateur detective. Forain went first to see the countess, the still surviving widow of the nobleman who fell fifteen years before on a duel on the same spot. He went in a literal sense to see her, and not to call on her. For he contented himself with sitting outside the café opposite her house and playing with an *apéritif* until she came out to her

carriage—a dark-browed lady, with a beauty rather fixed like a picture than still living like a flower: a portrait from a mummy-case. Then he merely glanced at the portrait in the old locket he had taken from the dead man's pocket, nodded almost approvingly, and made his way across the river to a less aristocratic and more purely commercial part of the town. Passing rapidly along a solid street of banks and public buildings, he reached a large hotel built on the same ponderous pattern, but having the usual litter of little tables on the pavement outside. They were intercepted with ornamental shrubs and covered with an awning striped with white and purple, and at a table at the extreme corner, against the last green afterglow of evening, he saw the black bulk of Baron Bruno sitting between his two friends. The awning that shaded them just cut off the upper part of his tall black hat, and Monk had the fancy that he resembled some black Babylonian caryatid supporting the whole building; perhaps there was something Assyrian about his large square beard. The Englishman felt a subconscious temptation to share his country-woman's prejudice, but it was evident that Forain did not share it. For he sat down with the three men, and began to exhibit a very unexpected camaraderie and even conviviality. He ordered wine and pressed it upon them, passing afterwards into animated conversation, and it was not until about half an hour afterwards that our imaginary spectator, hovering on his trail, would have seen him start up with a slight return to stiffness, salute the company and resume his singular journey.

His zigzag course through the lighted city carried

him first to a public telephone and then to a public office, which Monk was able to identify as the place where the dead body was awaiting medical examination. From this place he came out looking very grim, like one who has faced an ugly fact, but he said nothing and pursued his course to the police headquarters, where he was closeted for some time with the authorities. Then he crossed the river once more, walking swiftly and still in silence, and in a quiet corner of Paris struck the worn white gateway of a building that had once been an hotel in the ancient and aristocratic sense, and was now an hotel in a more commercial but particularly quiet fashion. Passing through the porch and passages, he came out on a garden so secluded that the very sunset sky seemed a private awning of gold and green like the awning of purple and silver under which the sombre baron had sat. A few guests in evening dress were scattered at tables under the trees, but Forain went swiftly past them to one table near a flight of garden steps, at which he could see a girl in grey with golden hair. It was Margaret Crane; she looked up as he approached, but she only said, as if breathlessly: 'Do you know any more about the murder?'

Before he could reply her father had appeared at the top of the steps, and Forain felt vaguely that while the girl's grey dress seemed to harmonize with everything, the rigid and rusty black of the old man's clothes remained like the protest of a Puritan in a garden of Cavaliers.

'The murder,' he repeated in a loud and harsh voice, heard everywhere: 'That's what we want to know about. This murder, sir!'

'Mr. Crane,' said Forain, 'I hope you know how I feel your position, but it is only fair to warn you that in these criminal matters one must speak carefully. If it comes to a trial, your case will be none the better if you have abused these men at random, even in private. And I am bound to say, not only that the duel as a duel seems to have been regular, but that the duellists seem to be men of marked regularity.'

'What do you mean?' demanded the old man.

'I will be frank with you and own I have seen them since,' said Forain. 'Nay, I have passed a sort of festive evening with them—or what I meant to be a festive evening. But I am forced to say they are as little festive as your own conscience could desire. Indeed, they seem to have business habits very much like your own. Frankly, I tried to make them drink and to draw them into a game of cards, but the baron and his friends coldly declined, said they had appointments, and we parted after black coffee and a brief and rather curious conversation.'

'I hate them the more for that,' said the girl.

'You are quick, Mademoiselle,' observed Forain, with a growing admiration. 'I also took the matter in that spirit, if only for experiment. I said bluntly to our baronial friend: "So long as I thought you were a drinking and a dicing company, I took this for a drunken accident. But let me tell you it does not look well when elderly men, themselves sober, themselves indifferent to play, get a mere boy among them and play cards with him. You know what is thought of that: it is thought that the old man takes a hand—well, rather too like an old

hand. And it is worse when he silences his opponent by fencing like an old hand also."'

'And what did they say to that?' asked the girl.

'It is painful for me to repeat it,' said Forain, 'but it is quite as uncomfortable a surprise to me. Just as I seem to have cornered them finally, that red-bearded man, Le Caron, whose sword made the mortal thrust, himself broke in like one abandoning disguise, with impatience and passion. "I respect the dead," he said, "but you force me from any reticence. I can only tell you it was not we, the elder men, who dragged the boy into drink; it was he who dragged us. He arrived at the château half drunk already, and insisted on the baron ordering champagne from the Seven Stars down the road, for we were a temperate party and the cellar was not even stocked. It was he who insisted on play; it was he who taunted us with being afraid to play; it was he who at last added, quite wantonly and in wild falsehood, the intolerable taunt that we cheated at play."'

'I will not believe it,' said Crane, but his daughter remained silent, with her pale and penetrating face turned towards the amateur detective, who continued his report of the conversation.

'"Oh, I don't ask you to take my word," Le Caron went on. "Ask Lorraine himself, ask Dr. Vandam himself, who was sent to the inn for the wine, so that he was away when the row occurred. He stopped behind there to settle, and wasn't sorry, I think, to be out of it. He also, like myself, is glad to be *bourgeois* in these matters. Ask the innkeeper himself; he will tell you the wine was bought well on in the evening, after the young man arrived.

Ask the people at the railway station; they will tell you when the young man arrived. You can easily test my story."'

'I can see by your face,' said the girl in a low voice, 'that you have tested it. And you have found it true.'

'You see the heart of things,' said Forain.

'I cannot see the hearts of these men,' she answered. 'But I can see the hollows where their hearts should be.'

'You still find them horrible,' he said. 'Who can blame you?'

'Horrible!' cried the old man. 'Didn't they murder my son?'

'I speak only as an adviser,' observed the Frenchman. 'I know you cannot believe a duellist could be a respectable man. I only say that, as a fact, these seem to be respectable men. I have not only verified their tale, but traced back something of their past. They seem to have been concerned with commercial things, but solidly and on a considerable scale; I am in touch with the police dossiers, and should know of any other such scandals about them. Forgive me; I fear I do think that a duel is sometimes justifiable. I will not horrify you by saying that this one was justifiable. I only warn you that, in French opinion, they may be able to justify it.'

'Yes,' said the girl. 'They grow more horrible as you speak of them. Oh! that is the really horrible man—the man who can always be justified. Honest men leave more holes gaping, like my poor brother, but the wicked are always in armour. Is there anything so blasphemous as the bad man's case when his case is complete, as the lawyers say; when the

judge gravely sums up, and the jury agree and the police obey, and everything goes on oiled wheels? Is there anything so oily as the smell of that oil? It is then I feel I cannot wait for the Day of Judgement to crack their whited sepulchres.'

'And it is then,' said Forain quietly, 'that I fight a duel.'

The girl started a little. 'Then?' she repeated.

'Then,' repeated the Frenchman, lifting his head. 'You, Mademoiselle, have uttered the defence of the good duellist. You have proved the right of the private gentleman to draw a private sword. Yes, it is then that I do this criminal and bloody thing that so much horrifies you and your father. Yes, it is then that I become a murderer. When there is no crack in the whitewash and I cannot wait for the wrath of God. And permit me the reminder that you have not yet heard the end of my interview with the men who have left you in mourning.'

Crane still stared in frosty suspicion, but the girl, as Forain suggested, had great intuitions. Her face and eyes kindled as she gazed.

'You don't mean——' she began, and then stopped.

Forain rose to his feet. 'Yes,' he said. 'Being such a bloodthirsty character, I must no longer remain in company so respectable. Yes, mademoiselle, I have challenged the man who killed your brother.'

'Challenged!' repeated the bristling Crane. 'Challenged—more of this—of this butchery!' and he choked. But the girl had risen also and stretched out her hand like a queen.

'No, father,' she said. 'This gentleman is our

friend, and he caught me out fairly. But I see now that there is more in French wit than we have understood; yes, and more in French duelling.'

With a heightened colour and a lowered voice, Forain answered: 'Mademoiselle, my inspiration is English.' And, with a rather abrupt bow, he strode away, accompanied by Harry Monk, who regarded him with a contained amusement.

'I cannot affect to hope,' said Monk airily, 'that I myself constitute the English inspiration of your life.'

'Nonsense,' said the other rather testily, 'let us get back to business. As I imagined your views of duelling were so similar to old Crane's that you could not consistently represent me, I've asked his unfortunate son's seconds to act as mine. I believe that young Lorraine will be of great use in helping us to probe this mystery. I have talked to him, and I am convinced of his great ability.'

'And you have talked to me for years,' said Monk, laughing, 'and you are convinced of my great stupidity.'

'Of your great sincerity,' said Forain. 'That is why I do not ask you to help me here.'

Monk's scruples, however, did not prevent his being present at the new encounter that had been so rapidly and even irregularly arranged. And his travels with his eccentric friend, which had already begun to remind him of the overturns and recurrences of a nightmare, brought him a few days later back to the old duelling ground of the Château d'Orage. The garden of Baron Bruno had apparently been selected for a second time as a sort of concession to the baron's party, but it was rather a

grim privilege, and they evidently felt it as such. So little disposed were they, indeed, to linger about the place where they had once feasted and fought, that the baron's motor was waiting in the road without to take them back immediately to Paris. Forain had always vaguely felt that the baron was very tenuously attached to his house and property, and in this case his party seemed to revisit it like ghosts. The prejudice of Margaret Crane would have said that a shadow of doom was visibly closing in on them. But it was more reasonable, and consonant with the more quiet and *bourgeois* character to which they seemed entitled, to suppose that they were naturally distressed at returning to the scene of their one reluctant deed of blood. Whatever the reason, the baron's brown face was heavy and sombre, and Le Caron, when he again found himself standing sword in hand on that fatal grass, was so white that his beard looked scarlet, like false hair or fiery paint. Monk almost fancied that the bright point of the poised rapier was faintly vibrant, as in a hand that shook.

The pine-shadowed park, with its careless and almost colourless decay, seemed a place where centuries might pass unnoticed. The white morning light served only to accentuate the grey details, and Monk caught himself fancying that it was truly the ashen vegetation of primeval æons. This may have been an effect of his nerves, which were not unnaturally strained. After all, this was the third duel in those grounds, and two had ended in death; he could not but wonder if his friend was to be the last victim. Anyhow, it seemed to him that the preliminaries were intolerably lengthy. Le Caron

had long and low-voiced consultations with the lowering baron; and even Forain's own seconds, Lorraine and the doctor, seemed more inclined to wait and whisper than to come to the mortal business. And all this was the more strange because the fight, when it did come at last, seemed to be over in a flash, like a conjuring trick.

The swords had barely touched twice or thrice when Le Caron found himself swordless. His weapon had twitched itself like a live thing out of his hand, and went spinning and sparkling over the garden wall; they could hear the steel tinkle on the stones of the road. Forain had disarmed him with a turn of the wrist.

Forain straightened himself and made a salute with his sword.

'Gentlemen,' he said, 'I am quite satisfied, if you are. After all, it was a slight cause of quarrel, and the honour of both parties is, so far, secure. Also, I understand, you gentlemen are anxious to get back to town.'

Monk had long felt that his friend was more and more disposed to let the opposite group off lightly; he had long been speaking of them soberly as sober merchants. But whether or no it was the anti-climax of safety, he had a sense that the figures opposite had shrunk, and were more commonplace and ugly. The eagle nose of Le Caron looked more like a common hook; his fine clothes seemed to sit more uneasily on him, as on a hastily dressed doll; and even the solid and solemn baron somehow looked more like a large dummy outside a tailor's shop. But the strangest thing of all was that the baron's other colleague, Valence, of the shaven head, was standing

astraddle in the background wearing a broad though a bitter grin. As the baron and the defeated duellist made their way rather sullenly through the garden door to the car beyond, Forain went up to this last member of the strange group, and (much to Monk's surprise) talked quickly and quietly for several minutes. It was only when Bruno's great voice was heard calling his name from without that this last figure also turned and left the gardens.

'*Exeunt* brigands!' said Forain with a cheerful change in his voice, 'and now the four detectives will go up and examine the brigands' den.'

And he turned and began once again to mount the slope to the château, the rest following in single file. Monk, who was just behind him, remarked abruptly when they were half-way up the ascent:

'So you didn't kill him, after all?'

'I didn't want to kill him,' replied his French friend.

'What did you want?'

'I wanted to see whether he could fence,' said Forain. 'He can't.'

Monk eyed in a puzzled manner the tall, straight, grey-clad back of the figure mounting ahead of him, but was silent till Forain spoke again.

'You remember,' continued that gentleman, 'that old Crane said his unfortunate son had actually got prizes for fencing. But that carroty-whiskered Mr. Le Caron hardly knows how to hold a foil. Of course, it 's very natural; after all, he is but a quiet business man, as I told you, and deals more in gold than steel.'

'But, my good man,' cried Monk, addressing the back in exasperation, 'what the devil does it all mean? Why was Crane killed in the duel?'

'There never was any duel,' said Forain, without turning round.

Dr. Vandam behind uttered an abrupt sound as of astonishment, or perhaps enlightenment; but, though it was followed by many questions, Forain said no more till they stood in the long inner room of the château, with the weapons on the wall and the ebony cabinet, on which the black cherubs looked blacker than ever. Forain felt more darkly a certain contradiction between their colour and shape, that was like a blasphemy. Black cherubs were like the Black Mass—they were symbols of some idea that hell is an inverted copy of heaven, like a landscape hanging downwards in a lake.

He shook off his momentary dreams and stooped over the drawers of the cabinet, and when he spoke again it was lightly enough.

'You know the château, Monsieur Lorraine,' he said, 'and I expect you know the cabinet, and even the drawer. I see it's been opened lately.' The drawer, indeed, was not completely closed, and, giving it a sudden jerk, he pulled it completely out of the cabinet. Without further words he bore it, with its contents, back into the card-room and put it on the round table; and at his invitation his three colleagues or co-detectives drew up their chairs and sat round it. The drawer seemed to contain the contents of an old curiosity shop, such as Balzac loved to describe—a tumbled heap of brown coins, dim jewels and trinkets, of which tales, true and false, are told.

'Well, what about it?' asked Monk. 'Do you want to get something out of it?'

'Not exactly,' replied the investigator. 'I rather fancy I want to put something into it.'

He pulled from his pocket the locket with the dark portrait, and poised it thoughtfully in his hand.

'We have now to ask ourselves,' went on the detective to his colleagues, 'why young Crane was carrying this, which is a portrait of the countess?'

'He went about Paris a good deal,' said Dr. Vandam rather grimly.

'If she knew him well,' proceeded Forain, 'it seems strange she has taken no notice of his sad end.'

'Perhaps she knew him a little too well,' cried Lorraine, with a little laugh. 'Or perhaps, though it's an ugly thing to say, she was glad to be rid of him. There were uglier stories when her husband, the old count——'

'You know the château, Monsieur Lorraine?' repeated Forain, looking at him steadily and even sternly. 'I think that's where the locket came from.' And he tossed it on to the many-coloured heap in the drawer.

Lorraine's eyes were literally like black diamonds as he gazed fascinated at the heap; he seemed really too excited to reply. Forain continued his exposition.

'Poor Crane, I fancy, must have found it here. Or else somebody found it here and gave it to him. Or else somebody—by the way, surely that 's a real Renascence chain there—Italian and fifteenth century, unless I'm wrong. There are valuable things here, Monsieur Lorraine, and I believe you're a judge of them.'

'I know a little about the Renascence,' answered Lorraine, and the pale Dr. Vandam flashed a queer look at him through his spectacles.

'There was a ring, too, I suspect,' said Forain. 'I have put back the locket. Would you, Monsieur Lorraine, kindly put back the ring?'

Lorraine rose, the smile still on his lips; he put two fingers in his waistcoat pocket and drew out a small circlet of wrought gold with a green stone.

The next moment Forain's arm shot across the table trying to catch his wrist; but his motion, though swift as his sword-thrust, was yet too late. Young Mr. Waldo Lorraine stood with the smile on his lips and the Renascence ring on his finger while one could count five. Then his feet slipped on the smooth floor and he fell dead across the table, with his black ringlets among the rich refuse of the drawer. Almost simultaneously with the shock of his fall. Dr. Vandam had taken one bound, burst out of the french windows and disappeared down the garden like a cat.

'Don't move,' said Forain with a steely steadiness. 'The police are on the watch. I laid them on the other day in Paris when I saw poor Crane's body.'

'But surely,' cried his bewildered friend, 'it was not only then that you saw the wound on his body.'

'I mean the wound on his finger,' said Forain.

He stood a minute or two in silence, looking down at the fallen figure across the table with pity and something almost like admiration.

'Strange,' he said at last, 'that he should die just here, with his head in all that dustbin of curiosities that he was born among and had such a taste for. You saw he was a Jew, of course, but, my God, what a genius! Like your young Disraeli—and he might have succeeded too and filled the world with

his fame. Just a mistake or two, breaking a cucumber frame in the dark, and he lies dead in all that dead bric-à-brac, as if in the pawnshop where he was born.'

The next appointment Forain made with his friends was at the office of the *Sûreté*, in a private room. Monk was a little late for the appointment; the party was already assembled round the table, and it gave him a final shock. He was not, indeed, surprised to see Crane and his daughter sitting opposite Forain, and he guessed that the man presiding, with the white beard and the red rosette, was the chief of police himself. But his head turned when he found the fifth place filled with the broad shoulders, cropped hair and ghastly handsome face of Valence, the younger second of Le Caron.

Old Crane was in the middle of a speech when he entered, and was speaking with his usual smouldering and self-righteous indignation.

'I send my son to execute a deed of partnership in a good business with Miller, Moss & Hartman, one of the first firms in the civilized world, sir, with branches in America and all the colonies, as big as the Bank of England. What happens? No sooner does he set foot in your country than he gets in a dicing, drinking, duelling gang, and is butchered in a barbarous brawl with drawn swords.'

'Mr. Crane,' said Forain gently, 'you will forgive me if I both contradict you and congratulate you. Given so sad a story, I give you the gladdest news a father could hear. You have wronged your son. He did not drink, he did not dice, he did not duel. He obeyed you in every particular. He devoted himself wholly to Messrs. Miller, Moss & Hart-

man; he died in your service, and he died rather than fail you.'

The girl leaned swiftly forward, and she was pale but radiant.

'What do you mean?' she cried. 'Then who were these men with swords and hateful faces? What were they doing? Who are they?'

'I will tell you,' answered the Frenchman calmly. 'They are Messrs. Miller, Moss & Hartman, one of the first firms in the civilized world, as big as the Bank of England.'

There was a silence of stupefaction on the other side of the table, and it was Forain who went on, but with a change and challenge in his voice.

'Oh, how little you rich masters of the modern world know about the modern world! What do you know about Miller, Moss & Hartman, *except* that they have branches all over the world and are as big as the Bank of England? You know they go to the ends of the earth, but where do they come from? Is there any check on businesses changing hands or men changing names? Miller may be twenty years dead, if he was ever alive. Miller may stand for Muller, or Muller for Moses. The back-doors of every business to-day are open to such new-comers, and do you ever ask from what gutters they come? And then you think your son lost if he goes into a music-hall, and you want to shut up all the taverns to keep him from bad company. Believe me, you had better shut up the banks.'

Margaret Crane was still staring with electric eyes. 'But what in the name of mercy happened?' she cried.

The investigator turned slightly in his chair and

made a movement, as of somewhat sombre introduction, towards Valence, who sat looking at the table with a face like coloured stone.

'We have with us,' said Forain, 'one who knows from within the whole of this strange story. We need not trouble much about his own story. Of the five men who have played this horrible farce, he is certainly the most honest, and therefore the only one who has been in prison. It was for a crime of passion long ago, which turned him from being at worst a Lothario to being at worst an Apache. Hence these more respectable ruffians had a rope round his neck, and to-day he is not so much a traitor as a runaway. If on that hideous night he held a candle to the devil, he is no devil-worshipper; at least he has little worship for these devils.'

There was a long silence, and the stony lips of the shaven Apollo curled and moved at last. 'Well,' he said, 'I won't trouble you with much about these men I had to serve. Their real names were not Lorraine, Le Caron, &c., any more than they were Miller, Moss, &c., though they went by the first in society and the second in business. Just now we need not trouble about their real names; I'm sure they never did. They were cosmopolitan money-lenders mostly; I was in their power, and they kept me as a big bully and bodyguard to save them from what they richly deserved at the hands of many ruined men. They would no more have thought of fighting a duel than of going on a crusade. I knew something of the countess, who has nothing to do with the story, except that I got them a short lease of her house. One evening Lorraine, who was the leader and the cleverest rascal in Europe, young as

he was, happened to be turning over the drawer of curios, which he had taken out of the black cabinet and put on the round card-table. He found the old Italian ring, and told us it was poisoned; he knew a lot about such toys. Suddenly he made a momentary gesture covering the drawer, like a fence when he hears the police. He recovered his calm; there was no danger, but the gesture told of old times. What had produced it was a man who had appeared silently, and was standing outside the french windows, having entered up the garden slope. He was a slim, fair young man, carefully dressed and wearing a silk hat, which he took off as he entered. "My name is Crane," he said a little stiffly and nervously, and plucked off his glove to offer his hand, which Lorraine shook with great warmth. The others joined in the greeting, and it gradually became apparent that this was the representative of some firm with whom they were to make an important amalgamation. In the entrance-room all was welcome and gaiety, but when young Crane had followed old Bruno into the big inner room, leaving his hat and gloves on the card-table by the curios, I fancy things did not go so smoothly. I did not understand the business fully, but I was watching the three others who did, and I came to the conclusion that Bruno, in their name, was making some proposition to the new junior partner which they regarded as a very handsome proposition for him, but which he did not regard as altogether handsome in other respects. They seemed quite confident at first, but as the talk went on in the inner room Vandam and Le Caron exchanged gloomy glances; and suddenly a full, indignant voice came from

within: "Do you mean, sir, that my father is to suffer?" and then, after an inaudible reply, "Confidential, sir! The confidence, I imagine, is placed by my father in me. I shall instantly report this astounding proposal. . . . No, sir, I am not to be bribed." I was watching Lorraine's face, that seemed to have grown old as a yellow parchment, and his eyes glittered like the old stones on the table. He was leaning across it, his mouth close to the ear of Vandam, and he was saying: "He must not leave the house. Our work all over the world is lost if he leaves this house." "But we can't stop him," whispered the doctor, and his teeth chattered. "Can't!" repeated Lorraine, with a ghastly smile, yet somehow like a man in a trance: "Oh, one *can* do anything. I never did it before, though." He picked the poison ring out of the heap. Then he swiftly drew the young man's glove out of his hat on the table. There came a burst of speech from the inner room: "I shall tell him you are a pack of thieves!" and Lorraine quietly slipped the ring inside a finger of the glove, a moment before its owner swung into the room. He clapped on his hat, furiously pulled on his gloves, and strode to the french windows. Then he flung them open wide upon the sunset, stepped out and fell dead on the garden turf beyond. I remember his tall hat rolling down the slope, and how horrible it seemed that it should still be moving among the bushes, when he lay so still.'

'He died like a soldier for a flag,' said Forain.

'Perhaps you have already guessed,' went on Valence, 'the rest of the story. Hell itself must have inspired Lorraine that night, for the whole drama

was his and worked out to the last detail. The difficulty in every murder is how to hide the corpse. He decided not to hide it, but to show it: I might say to advertise it. He had been striding up and down the inner hall, his flexible face working with thought, when his eye caught the crossed swords on the trophy. "This man died in a duel," he said. "In England he'd have died out duck-shooting, and in Russia of dynamite. In France he died in a duel. If we all take the lighter blame, they will never look for heavier; it's a good rule with confessions," and again he wore that awful smile. He not only staged the duel, but the drunken quarrel that was to explain it. They were quite right when they said the champagne was not sent for till after the boy's arrival. It was not sent for till after the boy's arrival. It was not sent for till after his death. They carefully scattered cards, carefully threw furniture about and so on. By the way, they didn't shuffle the packs enough to deceive Monsieur Forain. Then they put Le Caron—the showiest—in his shirt sleeves, did the same with the dead man, and then Lorraine deliberately passed the sword through the heart that had already ceased to beat. It seemed like a second murder, and a worse one. Then they carried him down in the dark, just before the dawn, so that no one could possibly see him save on the fighting ground. Lorraine thought of twenty little things; he took an old miniature of the countess from the cabinet and put it in the dead man's pocket, to put people off the scent—as it did. He left Mr. Crane's letter, because its warning against dissipation actually supported the story. It was all well fitted together, and if Le Caron

hadn't put his foot on a cucumber-frame in the dark I doubt if even Monsieur Forain would ever have found a hole in the business.'

Margaret Crane walked firmly out of the offices of the *Sûreté*, but at the top of the steps outside she wavered and might almost have fallen. Forain caught her by the elbow, and they looked at each other for a space; then they went down the steps and down the street together. She had lost a brother in that black adventure, and what else she gained is no part of the tale of the five strange men, or, as she came to call it afterwards, the five of swords. Margaret asked one more question about it, and their talk afterwards was of deeply different matters. She only said: 'Was it the wound you discovered on his finger that made you certain?'

'Partly his finger,' he assented gravely, 'and partly his face. There was something still fresh on his face that made me fancy already that he was no waster, but had died more than worthily. It was something young and yet nobler than youth, and more beautiful than beauty. It was something I had seen somewhere else. In fact, it was the converse, so to speak, of the case in Rostand's play, "*Monsieur de Bergerac, je suis ta cousine.*"'

'I don't understand you,' she said.

'It was a family likeness,' replied her companion.

BLACK AND WHITE

By Nicholas Olde

Rowland Hern had been ordered a complete change and rest. He had been overworking himself in connexion with a case of more than ordinary difficulty and the advice was not given before it was needed.

I was delighted when he asked me to share his holiday at that young but thriving seaside resort, Beachport-on-Sea. It was a beautiful summer morning when our train left London, and we read our papers and smoked contentedly, commenting from time to time upon the news.

And, in the course of the journey, our conversation turned, eventually, to the subject of wills. 'It is never,' Hern was saying, 'possible to eliminate entirely all risk of testamentary mistakes; since no one can foresee the future with absolute certainty. Even in the case of bequests to individuals, there is always an element of risk: of the risk of the bequest resulting in injustice to some individual or individuals: of the risk of the form of the bequest defeating its own end: of the risk of its provisions inciting posterity to crime. You remember, for instance, the cases of Pemberton-Drysdale and of the Bishop of Wimbledon?'

'I remember them well,' I said.

'I was thinking of them when you spoke,' he said, 'for I have just been reading of some recent wills in this paper. Of course the details are not given in most cases—but here is one which might possibly defeat its own ends, or at any rate not at-

tain them. It is stated here that the late Lord Ponderbury has left £131,000. Of this £100,000 goes to the elder son, the present peer, and the remainder to the younger, who is still a minor, on the condition that he has £1,000 to his credit in his bank on his twenty-first birthday. The intention is, of course, excellent; but I think that it is not entirely a wise provision. The executors cannot very well come to the lad's help in any way, or they would defeat the letter, if not the spirit, of the testator's instruction. And yet the sum at stake is large enough to be a very strong temptation to an interested party.'

Our discussion of the subject was interrupted by our arrival at our destination. The nucleus of Beachport is a small fishing village which is being gradually swamped by modern 'bungalows' and so-called 'week-end cottages'; 'cottages' being merely a trade-term and the 'cottagers' being mainly wealthy society people and wealthier 'climbers'.

Although the weather was fair on our arrival, it did not look very promising, and, to my annoyance, knowing, as I did, Hern's irrepressible detective energy and also his imperative need of rest, we were greeted with the news that the little community had been roused to a state of almost panic-stricken excitement by a series of the most daring jewel-robberies.

The thief was alleged, by those of her victims who had caught a glimpse of her, to be a negress of terrifying aspect and incredible agility.

As no negress had ever been seen by day in that remote and almost sea-girt tract of country, and

as the marauder, however nearly captured, invariably eluded her pursuers and vanished as suddenly and unaccountably as she had appeared, it was only natural that a luxuriant growth of legend should spring up around her mysterious personality.

These legends were, in many cases, so wild and improbable that they hardly merit notice. It was said, for instance, that in one case, when hotly pursued, she eluded capture by jumping clean over the top of a house; that, on another, she entered a room in which her victims were sitting and abstracted much valuable jewellery without any one being aware of her presence until they saw a row of white teeth and two gleaming eyeballs peering through the window, thus proving, it was said, that she could make herself visible and invisible at will.

But the most persistent of all the legends was that she emerged at nightfall from the sea and disappeared under it again when her depredations were completed.

And, a few days after our arrival, the adherents of this theory were delighted with what was, apparently, a very strong confirmation of their sagacity.

It should be explained here that, soon after these outrages began, the more nervous among the visitors and householders conceived all sorts of schemes for the protection of themselves and their property. Many of these were of the most impracticable nature; and, indeed, the only really sensible one was that advocated by Miss Agnes Black, a young lady who was staying for the

month in a somewhat isolated cottage among the dunes with no other protector than an aged and almost bedridden widowed mother. This young lady had, with great good sense, endeavoured to institute a revolver club, and had, indeed, with the permission of a local landowner, actually set up a range among the dunes near her village. Her scheme, however, owing no doubt to the fact that every one else thought his or her own plan the best, was poorly supported; in spite of which she herself practised assiduously, and indeed had, in a very short time, become an extraordinarily deadly shot.

It was on the third night after our arrival at Beachport that, at about half-past ten, we heard shouts and the sound of footsteps racing past our house.

We rushed out and heard a revolver shot from the direction of the dunes.

Two or three men were running that way and, joining them, we sped along the sandy shore as two more reports rang out.

It was a moonlight night and, as we came level with the Blacks' cottage, we saw the graceful figure and golden hair of a girl in white standing close to the water's edge.

As we caught sight of her, her pistol, pointed towards the sea, flashed three times.

It was Miss Black. She was breathless and trembling when we came up, but, recovering herself, explained that a pearl pendant had been stolen from her dressing table, that she had seen the negress, had pursued her to the shore and had fired six times at the woolly black head before it disappeared beneath the waves.

The sea flashed silver beneath the moon, but the girl felt sure that she had missed through nervousness. Yet not a trace of the swimmer could be seen, nor was it possible for any one, on so bright a night, to land on that straight beach unseen by one or other of the dozen of us who had been drawn there by the pistol shots. Either the thief had been shot or had been drowned: otherwise the weird legends of her supernatural powers must surely be believed.

The next morning was wet, and Beachport, for two or three days, was a dreary spot indeed. It rained almost continually, and the gloom of the weather was certainly not relieved by the sight of men dragging the sea and others patrolling the shore in the search for a dead body.

However, after a few days, the sun came out; the vain vigil of the beach patrols was abandoned; and visitors and townsfolk mingled once more, discussing this latest extraordinary development.

Many theories of the disappearance were propounded by those who would not accept the supernatural: few of these were even moderately satisfactory; and not one of them survived the astounding reappearance, on the fifth night, of the terrible negress herself.

She brought off, on this occasion, perhaps the most successful raid of her career—certainly one of the most daring: for she was actually seen by three persons before she made her escape from the rifled house.

And yet, partly through her extraordinary agility and partly on account of the paralysing repul-

siveness of her aspect, she escaped with £500 worth of jewellery and vanished as completely as if the earth had swallowed her.

'This,' I said to Hern, 'is getting more and more of a puzzle.'

'I am not so sure about that,' he answered, and got up and tapped the barometer—a sign that he did not intend to be questioned.

'It is falling,' he said. 'We are not going to be very fortunate in the weather.'

We were not. For several days and nights it rained almost incessantly.

At last, however, a day came with bright sunshine and every sign of improvement.

At midday we went out and walked along the main street of the town which was thronged with people shopping and gossiping and congratulating themselves and one another on the change in the weather. If the World of Beachport was not there, at any rate his wife was.

Hern went into the local jeweller's shop and I waited on the pavement, exchanging greetings with friends who passed and, between whiles, admiring a very elaborate and beautiful diamond necklace which occupied the place of honour in the middle of the window. While I was doing so, the jeweller's hand appeared and removed the necklace and its heart-shaped case, leaving a gap in the display as startlingly conspicuous as a gap in a set of teeth. Presently Hern came out carrying a heart-shaped parcel under his arm. We went on to the town hall and bought two stalls for a concert to be held that night and one gallery seat, for the maid, as Hern explained to all his acquain-

tances as we walked home; and, indeed, he knew by now nearly everybody in Beachport.

'It is often,' he said, 'more important for a detective to know everybody than to be himself unknown. At any rate, it would be impossible to remain unknown here, where other people's business is the main topic of conversation.'

'I hope,' I said, 'that no gossip will tell the negress that you have taken home a diamond necklace and that the house will be empty to-night.'

Hern smiled.

When we got home he untied the parcel and showed me the necklace. It was certainly an exquisite piece of jewellery.

'Who is the lucky lady?' I asked.

Hern laughed. 'I don't know for certain,' he said. 'At any rate it was cheap and I could always sell it at a profit'; and he tied the parcel up again.

It was dusk when we reached the town hall, and the concert had just begun. We did not, however, hear much of it, for, at the interval, Hern nudged me and we slipped out, as I thought, for a cigarette.

In this I was mistaken; for Hern led me home by back streets to the back door.

He had left the lights turned low in the study and the window was partly open; so that my surprise was great when I saw the heart-shaped parcel on the table in full view from the outside.

Hern signed to me not to speak and led me into the dining-room across the passage. And, though it was now nearly dark, he would not let me light the gas or even my pipe, and we waited in darkness and silence.

It must have been ten o'clock when we heard a slight sound from the casement of the study window, and we stood up and watched across the passage through the open doors.

Presently a tiny electric torch flashed on the parcel on the table, and we had a glimpse of shining white eyeballs under a mop of woolly black hair.

Then the torch went out and there was a quick rustle of skirts.

We leaped forward, but the thief was too quick, and we saw her dim form speeding on silent feet across the lawn as we started in pursuit.

Fitful glimpses, by the light of the clouded moon, showed us that our quarry was making towards the jetty, and, good runners as we both were, we had travelled nearly half its length before we got within three yards of her.

Then she looked over her shoulder as she ran, flashed her white teeth in a mocking grin, and, hardly checking her pace, plunged over the side into the calm sea.

Several men had joined us in the last stage of our pursuit, and we all peered over the side at the spreading rings on the water, but no head appeared, nor any bubbles. The shout went up, 'It's a woman overboard! Fetch a boat!' and then, from further along the jetty, we heard a cry and saw a woman's form run to the edge and dive into the sea.

'Where did she sink?' called a girl's voice as a golden-haired head appeared swimming below us.

'Just where you are, Miss Black,' answered a fisherman, and the plucky girl disappeared under the water.

After what seemed an incredibly long time she came up, took breath, and dived again.

'I cannot find her,' she panted, coming to the surface once more.

By this time a boat had pulled out from the shore and the would-be rescuer was helped on to the jetty.

I could not help contrasting the appearance of the fair, golden-haired heroine standing before us with the woolly-pated, dusky miscreant now, presumably, rolling about the sea-bed below our feet.

'Who was it?' asked the girl, when she had recovered her breath.

'It was the negress,' said Hern. 'The other night you tried to kill her and to-night you tried to save her.'

'Good heavens,' she exclaimed. 'I only heard them say it was a woman; I never thought of it being her.'

'But, you know,' she added, 'I didn't try to kill her really.'

'I know that,' said Hern with a smile.

By this time the concert had ended and half the population was on the jetty. The mayor had sent for a car to take the girl home, and the doctor had told us that she was none the worse for her heroic efforts. Already the bathing superintendent and another man were diving in the hope of an eleventh-hour rescue. Hern and I strolled out to the end of the jetty before we returned home, but we saw no sign of the missing woman.

Dragging operations were started again, and, though the superstitious shook their heads, were this time attended with a certain limited success.

A hat and a pair of black gloves, and also the heart-shaped case, were recovered—but neither the negress nor the necklace.

The mayor and several of the leading townsfolk would have liked to make some public recognition of Miss Black's heroism; but the aged mother was seriously unnerved, not only by the fear of the negress but by the contemplation of her daughter's two dangerous adventures; and the pair had therefore decided upon an immediate departure.

The weather once more became unpleasant, and Hern fell in with my suggestion that we should try some other resort for the remainder of our holiday.

Although he did not seem to worry over the loss of the necklace even as much as I did, it seemed to me that this must have added, to some extent, to his sense of failure in having let a criminal slip from his grasp; and I felt that it was probably this feeling which made him so ready to agree to a change of scenery.

This was so obviously desirable that I fell in with his suggestion that we should spend two or three days in town on our way.

During these I did not see much of him, and he seemed tired when he came in on the third night.

He told me, however, that he had taken a small house, called 'The Gables', at Sandness for a week; and we decided to go down the following evening.

The weather was certainly doing its best to spoil our holiday. It was raining hard when we reached Sandness, and we drove from the station to 'The Gables' in a cab.

'This weather seems to follow us about,' I said.

'It's a comfort to think that the Beachport negress won't. She hasn't appeared again, judging by the papers, so I think that we can presume her to be dead.'

Hern shrugged his shoulders, and I felt that I had broached a distasteful topic. 'No, she won't follow us here,' he said.

The rain lasted all the next day and we did not go out. The following day was fine, but Hern kept me in till the late afternoon playing chess, and even then would not go beyond the garden or even let me go.

We explored the greenhouses and the toolsheds, and Hern found a hose in the latter which he fastened to the tap, and had actually started to water the flowers when I reminded him that it had not long stopped raining. Then we went in and played another game of chess until it was time to dress for dinner.

Hern tapped the barometer.

'I shall not dress to-night,' he said, 'but I shall be glad if you will.'

'Certainly,' I said. 'I usually do.'

'I should like you to dress rather unusually to-night,' he said. 'For instance, a bathing costume with a raincoat and rubber-soled shoes. I will explain later.'

'You were talking about that negress,' said Hern, when I had sat down in the curious costume prescribed.

'Yes,' I said. 'She interests me. She must have been a most expert burglar.'

'On the contrary,' said Hern, 'she was nothing of the sort. Look at the fastenings of these win-

dows. All seaside cottages have fastenings like that. A child could open them.'

'But what has she to do with my having dinner in this rig-out?' I asked.

'Because I hope to catch her to-night with your help.'

'Good heavens, Hern,' I cried. 'Is she here? You told me she would not follow us, you know.'

'She didn't,' said Hern; 'she came before us on the morning of the day that we came. We followed her.'

'But why should she burgle this house in particular?' I asked, 'and why on a bright night like to-night and not on a dark night like last night?'

'She couldn't have come last night,' he said, 'because it was raining and she would have got wet.'

'But, good gracious,' I said, 'she didn't seem afraid to get wet when she jumped into the sea. And why this house?'

Hern pulled a folded newspaper from his pocket. It was a local paper that he had bought at the station on our arrival.

He pointed to a paragraph, and I read as follows:

INTERESTING ARRIVAL.

Our readers will be interested to learn that Mr. Nathan Mackenzie, the well-known South African diamond merchant, has taken 'The Gables' for a short period, and will go into residence on the 27th inst. It is hoped to arrange for this famous expert, during his stay, to give a lecture in the Assembly Room on 'Diamonds and other Gems'; and it is understood that he has consented to bring with

him some very beautiful and valuable specimens with which to illustrate his lecture.

'That, I hope,' said Hern, 'will have baited the trap. She is very innocent.'

'It's a curious sort of innocence,' I said.

'Yes,' said Hern, 'it is a very curious sort of innocence: I think that she is not so black as she is painted.'

As soon as dinner was over Hern sent the maid out for the evening, and, when it was nearly dark, led me out and into the tool-shed. Through the half-open door of the shed we could see the half-open window of the dining-room. Hern explained that if the woman came I was to wait until she was fumbling with the stay-bar and then to jump out and seize her from behind.

'Are you armed?' I asked.

'Yes,' he answered.

'I suppose,' I said, 'you will only use your weapon to frighten her?'

'Oh no,' said Hern, 'I shall shoot straight in her face.'

'My dear fellow,' I cried, aghast at such ferocity, 'why, in Heaven's name?'

'To improve her beauty,' said Hern grimly.

After a long, cold wait, when I had already decided that we were doomed to disappointment, a dark figure slid silently between us and the window that we were watching. I waited for Hern's signal and jumped from our hiding-place. Then, grappling with the intruder, I turned her round until she faced Hern, who flashed his electric torch on the captive and, picking up the hose that he had left still fast-

ened on the tap, let drive straight at the face of my dusky captive. The woman was very strong and struggled like a wild thing, kicking me with her rubber-soled heels. But I kept my grip of her and Hern kept up his play with the hose; and I soon realised the reason for my strange costume. Gradually, to my astonishment, the black countenance grew white, the woolly black hair lost its woolliness, and became gold, and I found myself holding, in a firm grasp, Miss Agnes Black, looking just as she had looked that night on the jetty at Beachport. She was wearing the same dark jersey and skirt, but had, on this occasion, a pair of black gloves; and she was nearly as wet as she had been then.

Fiercely as she had fought, the girl obviously had a sense of humour. As soon as she saw that the game was lost she broke into a peal of silvery laughter.

'Good evening, "Mr. Mackenzie",' she said. 'I think that this is the second time you have forced me to have a bath. Last time I had a tiring swim for half a dozen tiny lumps of coal, when coal was at its lowest price too! This time I don't seem to have got anything at all.'

'I thought "black diamonds" rather appropriate, you see,' said Hern. 'But there are some red-hot ones indoors; so come in and dry yourself before you go home.'

'Are you going to let me go home?' asked the girl.

'I expect so,' said Hern, and led the way indoors.

'When did you find out that it was coal?' asked Hern, when the girl had ensconced herself before the fire.

'I opened the case when I was washing the black off my face and hair among the piles under the jetty,' she answered. 'When did you see through me?' she added.

'Well,' said Hern, 'I guessed when you were shooting from the shore at, shall we say, red herrings? I was almost sure when the negress came to life again; and I was quite sure when I walked to the end of the jetty, after you had failed to rescue yourself, and saw the wet marks where you had climbed on to it and run across before your heroic dive!'

'Yes,' she laughed, 'I must have left a good trail. It is disappointing to be caught now,' she added, 'when I only wanted another fifty pounds; and the time is so short too.'

Hern took out his cheque book, wrote a cheque and handed it to her.

'That is good of you,' she said.

'Pay it back when you pay the others back,' he said. 'I suppose you will.'

'That will be after the 14th,' she said. 'Everything will be returned then.'

'And now,' said Hern, 'tell me one thing. How did you find some one to advance the money on the jewellery?'

'I haven't yet,' she said, 'but I shall when I get to town. I suppose any pawnbroker——?'

'Good heavens!' he cried, 'you'd be in prison in an hour. Have you no other scheme?'

'None,' said the girl, looking scared. 'Surely there's some one I can go to.'

'There are few,' said Hern, 'who would take the very serious risk and whom you could trust. What date did you say?'

'The 14th,' answered the girl.

Hern scribbled something on a sheet of paper, folded it up and gave it to the girl. 'You had better call there,' he added, 'when you are back in town. It is the address of the only man I know who is likely to help you. Good night, Miss Black.'

'I told you,' he said presently, with a smile, 'that the blackamoor was not so black as she was painted. Her heart was never black: and even her name will not always be Black. I got a lot of very useful information during those three days that we spent in town.'

About ten days later, after we had got back to London, the morning paper was full of the sensational return, by post, of the jewels taken from various people in the notorious Beachport robberies: the only exceptions being, the paper stated, the valuable diamond necklace stolen from Mr. Rowland Hern, the well-known detective, and a pearl pendant belonging to Miss Agnes Black, 'who', we read, 'is to be married at an early date to the younger brother of our youngest peer. It is believed that a secret engagement between the couple has existed for some time, but it was not made known to their friends until the intended bridegroom attained his majority, an event which he celebrated so recently as the 14th of this month.'

'Who was the receiver whose address you gave her?' I asked Hern, when I had read this to him.

'Oh,' he said, 'his name is Rowland Hern. After all,' he added, 'she risked her liberty, if not her life, for the sake of a very decent young man who might have suffered a serious injustice owing

to several contingencies which his father never contemplated. His capital has been wisely invested, but not in such a manner that it could be accepted by the executors as fulfilling the curious condition of which I told you. And really, you know, although she certainly broke the law, the girl has done more good than harm and has, most certainly, provided us with a quite amusing adventure.'

A few weeks later the papers announced the marriage of 'the Hon. Peregrine Whyte, brother of the present Lord Ponderbury, who only succeeded to the title on the death of his father a few months ago, to Miss Agnes Mary Black, only daughter of the late Sir Hector Black and Lady Black of Dumfries'.

There were two interesting pieces of information given in connexion with this announcement. One was the statement that the bride's father had left her £10,000 as a dowry conditionally on her marrying a man worth at least that amount, 'a condition', added the writer, 'which has now been satisfied'.

'Another rather unwise provision,' commented Hern.

The other piece of information was an item in the list of wedding presents.

It read:

Mr. Rowland Hern: diamond necklace.

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